



A new **National Disability Strategy**



Stage 2 consultations:

# Summary report of Targeted Workshops

April 2021

This is a summary of the [Stage 2 detailed consultation report](#).

An [Easy Read](#) and [Auslan](#) version is also available.



# Overview

The current *National Disability Strategy 2010-2020* (the Strategy) is Australia's overarching framework for disability reform. It sets out a 10-year national framework for improving the lives of Australians with disability, their families and carers.

The Strategy is about creating a more inclusive society, enabling Australians with disability to fulfil their potential as equal citizens. It is also the main way Australia implements the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

The Australian Government is developing the new National Disability Strategy for beyond 2020. To develop the new Strategy, governments across Australia are working together and consulting people with disability.

A **National Disability Strategy Position Paper** (the Position Paper) was released for public consultation on 29 July 2020 by the Department of Social Services (DSS), on behalf of Commonwealth, state and territory disability ministers. The Position Paper outlined a range of key features governments proposed to include in the new Strategy and was the basis for most elements of the Stage 2 consultations.

This summary captures the feedback received during targeted engagement activities held between August and October 2020, which included:

- **18 focus groups and 4 interviews** with targeted audience groups of people with disability
- **5 cross-sector collaborative workshops** covering three key areas: community attitudes, employment, and early support for children and families.

In addition to the consultation sessions that are the subject of this report, DSS also:

- led an open, public submission process via its DSS Engage website (237 submissions on the Position Paper were received)
- held workshops with Disability Representative Organisations, academics and researchers
- held consultations with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people with disability
- held workshops with state and territory government officials
- supported a webinar co-hosted by the Australian Human Rights Commission and the Centre for Research Excellence in Disability and Health.

Stage 2 consultations will also help to inform the development of an [outcomes framework](#), which was released as a draft for public consultation on 29 October 2020. Seventy-four submissions were received on the draft outcomes framework.

Reports on other stage 2 consultations are available on the [DSS Engage site](#).

This stage 2 consultation report builds on the findings of the stage 1 report, [Right to Opportunity: Consultation report to help shape the next National Disability Strategy](#). In 2019, more than 3,000 people, including more than 1,000 Australians with disability, took part in consultations to help shape the National Disability Strategy for beyond 2020.

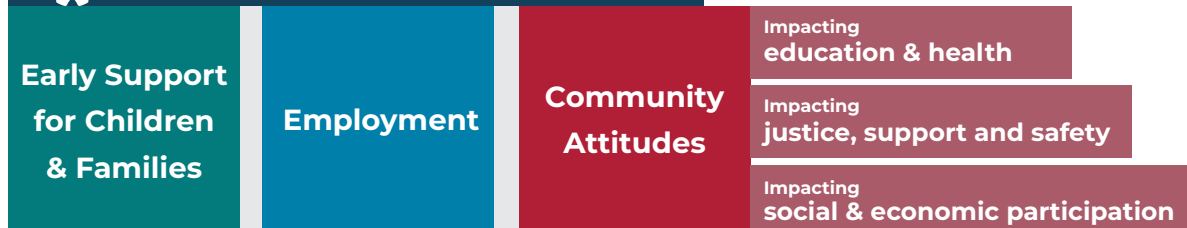
During the Stage 2 focus groups and workshops, participants said the next Strategy needs to:

- be strength-based and build on what is working
- respond to existing or emerging gaps and opportunities for people with disability
- contain practical actions that can be implemented, measured and reported on
- include, where appropriate, stronger rights protections and legislation to align with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD).

# Participation in consultation workshops and focus groups



from the following audience groups:



# Outcome areas

Participants were asked about what could be improved under the outcomes areas. They raised many specific issues and suggestions, but common themes included:

1. **Improving the employment and financial security of people with disability** must be a priority to achieve better outcomes across all parts of life. People said there should be more employment opportunities for people with disability, and the Strategy could focus on improving access to employment through:

- promoting the employment of people with disability to all employers
- meaningful work opportunities
- customised employment that is more flexible to the needs of people with disability
- supporting opportunities for microenterprise led by people with disability

Participants raised concerns that many people with disability do not have financial security, or enough money for their basic living needs. This can cause additional disadvantage and stops people being able to access supports, services or things in their community. In rural and remote areas, in particular, the high cost of living expenses and a lack of local employment, put people with disability at risk of being financially insecure.

2. Some participants said there had been improvements in accessing their communities, particularly as a result of the NDIS as well as having more online groups available to build connections. **Physical access to places, spaces and infrastructure**, including housing, was raised as a barrier to living in some communities, and participants suggested the Strategy should help to ensure transport and buildings are fully accessible. Participants also said that **improving access to information, technologies and interpreters** should be a priority.

3. Some people said there had been **some improvements in the awareness of the rights of people with disability, but more needed to be done**. Participants suggested the Strategy should prioritise:

- support for people to better understand their rights and identify discrimination
- better complaints processes for enforcing people's rights
- implementing actions out of the Royal Commission and other reviews

4. **Participants said there needs to be continued improvements to the NDIS**, to make sure it is person-centred and works for all participants who access NDIS supports. They also said that for the millions of people with disability who can't access the NDIS, there need to be **better mainstream services and supports in the community**, that are accessible and appropriate for people with disability.

5. Participants focused strongly on ensuring that **education settings are more inclusive**, so children with disability can attend schools with their peers.

6. Participants raised concerns about the **lack of understanding of disability in health services**, which impacted their access to services as well as their overall wellbeing. They said there needs to be more training for health professionals.

# Guiding Principles

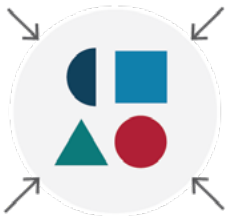
Participants supported having guiding principles in the Strategy. They focused on the following areas as important for the Strategy to ensure.



## A human rights approach within all aspects of the Strategy

Participants emphasised the need for a human rights approach within all aspects of the Strategy. They said it should promote more inclusive practices and support people who face the biggest barriers to realising their rights.

Participants reiterated the need for the Strategy to be more 'powerful' so that it has clear principles and actions within it to fully uphold the *United Nations Convention of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities*.



## The Strategy must move Australian policy towards inclusion and universal design

Large numbers of participants noted that Australian communities need to be more inclusive. They also said there's a need to avoid programs or interventions that cause 'othering' and separate people with disability from the rest of the community rather than including them in it.

Young people and advocates suggested the Strategy should help to improve the way people with disability are treated and included in society, especially in key areas like the workplace and education settings. Suggestions included:

- applying the social model of disability—an understanding that people are disabled by barriers in society rather than by their impairments or differences
- embedding universal design across all areas of community
- providing more guidance on inclusion in education, business, health and other community settings.

Participants suggested a focus of the Strategy should be on co-designing future projects and plans with people with disability. They particularly noted this would help to overcome barriers in access to public transport and public infrastructure.



## Greater recognition of diversity

Participants agreed the Strategy needs to carefully consider and prioritise different intersections for people with disability in the community, including:

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people
- CALD communities
- People who identify as LGBTIQ+
- People who experience additional disadvantage (e.g., lack of access to income) and intersectional discrimination (discrimination experienced by a person because of two or more aspects of their identity).

Participants noted these groups should be included in the Strategy 'uniquely' to help make sure all people with disability have access to supports and services on an equitable basis.



## More accessible information

Participants focused heavily on making sure information is more accessible to people. This included ensuring people who have lower literacy or language barriers are able to access and understand information. Participants highlighted the importance of publishing information about the NDIS and other disability supports in multiple languages and Easy Read format and improving access to interpreters.

Suggestions also included ensuring information about the Strategy is delivered in different ways and through multiple, trusted sources (such as through disability and advocacy organisations).

## Improving community attitudes towards people with disability



Participants agreed that improving attitudes in the community needs to be a key goal of the Strategy. They said that attitudes need to improve across the whole community because poor attitudes and a lack of understanding of disability, impacts people's access and inclusion across all outcome areas.

One of the strongest points made about community attitudes was that education and awareness starts early.

A large majority of participants suggested improvements in community attitudes would be achieved through:

- visibility of people with disability in the community, workplaces, education settings, and in the media
- programs, events, campaigns and advertising to improve awareness and education about different types of disability.

## Better accountability

Participants agreed the Strategy should include more actions and governments should be more accountable to delivery of the Strategy. This was seen as important in making a real difference to people's lives, and to achieving the outcomes set out for the Strategy.



### Improving accountability and accessible reporting

Many participants noted that information about the Strategy, and disability policies and programs must be delivered in more accessible ways. This included making sure reporting under the Strategy is delivered in different formats and channels so more people can access this information.

Participants suggested the need for independent and mandatory reporting of progress towards achieving outcomes, and for governments to be more transparent in their reporting.

Common suggestions for governments to be more accountable to the Strategy and to improve reporting of progress included:

- having information all together in one location, such as on a dedicated website
- continued and regular consultations throughout the implementation of the Strategy
- creating flexible opportunities for feedback outside of formal engagement processes and set milestones
- setting targets with timeframes for key areas such as employment, inclusion in education and health and wellbeing indicators
- annual reporting of outcomes, with promotion of this reporting to everyone in the community.

## Involving people with disability



### People with disability should be involved in all areas of the Strategy

Participants **strongly supported the development of an Engagement Plan** that improves the involvement of people with disability in all aspects of the Strategy. This included involvement in design and implementation and monitoring and reporting against the Strategy's outcomes.

There were concerns among all groups of participants about how often people without disability make decisions for people with disability. Given one in five people in the community live with some form of disability<sup>1</sup>, participants said it should be easier for people with disability to be in decision-making roles.

It was suggested that the involvement of people with disability should be at the core of everything within the Strategy. In particular, participants noted the importance of including young people with disability and people with complex needs in the Strategy and listening to people with disability about what their needs and wants are.

Participants also suggested providing more opportunities for people with disability to become leaders in their community through delivery of the Strategy over the next 10 years. They reiterated that people should be paid for their contributions of knowledge and experiences, rather than being expected to continually 'volunteer their time'.

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1 Survey of Disability, Ageing and Carers (SDAC), 2018. Australian Bureau of Statistics.