



BETTER ACCESS
— AUSTRALIA —

Response to National Disability Strategy

October 2020



Who we are:

Better Access Australia (BAA) is a policy and advocacy organisation focussing on Australia's health, disability and social services systems (the social sector). Better Access Australia contributes to the public policy debate in Australia through research, publications, public discussion and advocacy. It was established on the principle that the social sector works best when public, private and not-for-profit parties engage in good faith with the existing systems and processes, and that each party's contribution is recognised and valued.

Better Access Australia takes the view that the foundations of Australia's social sector are solid and deliver reasonable quality services to most Australians. However, there are significant challenges and opportunities facing the sector now and over the 10 years, and Australia's governments, industry and not-for-profit sectors need quality policy advice that is focused on delivering better outcomes for those who rely on these systems for a better life.

Better Access Australia Ltd
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BETTER HEALTH, DISABILITY AND SOCIAL SERVICES



Are you responding as an individual or as a representative of an organisation?

**If you are responding as an organisation your responses may be published and attributed to your organisation in public reporting.*

I'm responding as an individual	<input type="checkbox"/>
I'm representing an organisation (please provide the name of your organisation)	X
Better Access Australia Ltd	

Which of the following statements best describes you? Please select all that apply.

I'm a person with disability	<input type="checkbox"/>
I'm a parent / guardian or other family member of a person with disability	<input type="checkbox"/>
I'm a carer of a person with disability	<input type="checkbox"/>
I'm a support worker / work directly with people with disability	<input type="checkbox"/>
I'm a disability advocate and/or work for a disability peak association or service provider	<input type="checkbox"/>
I employ people with disability	<input type="checkbox"/>
I'm a business owner	<input type="checkbox"/>
I'm a health professional	<input type="checkbox"/>
I'm a researcher or academic	<input type="checkbox"/>
I'm employed by federal, state or territory, or local government	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other (please specify) Policy advocacy organisation	X

Which state or territory do you live in?



Australian Capital Territory	<input type="radio"/>
New South Wales	<input type="radio"/>
Northern Territory	<input type="radio"/>
Queensland	<input type="radio"/>
South Australia	<input type="radio"/>
Tasmania	<input type="radio"/>
Victoria	<input type="radio"/>
Western Australia	<input type="radio"/>
I do not live in Australia	<input type="radio"/>
Prefer not to say	<input type="checkbox"/>

Which type of geographic location do you live in?

A capital city	<input type="radio"/>
A regional city or town	<input type="radio"/>
A remote town or area	<input type="radio"/>
Prefer not to say	<input type="checkbox"/>

Do you identify as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander?

Yes	<input type="radio"/>
No	<input type="radio"/>
Prefer not to say	<input type="checkbox"/>

Are you from a culturally or linguistically diverse background?

Yes (please provide more information)	<input type="radio"/>
No	<input type="radio"/>



Prefer not to say	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
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Do you identify as a member of the LGBTQI+ community?

Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>
No	<input type="checkbox"/>
Prefer not to say	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>



Guided questions on proposals in the Position Paper

Vision and Outcome Areas

Reviews and consultations have told us that the six outcome areas in the current strategy are still the right ones. Therefore, the Government proposes keeping these outcome areas in the next Strategy.

It is important to keep an aspirational vision in the new Strategy to guide disability policy in Australia. Governments are suggesting to keep the current vision in the new Strategy, except to change the word 'citizen' to 'members of the community'.

The proposed vision is:

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

There are six outcome areas in the current strategy, which are proposed to continue in the new Strategy. Outcome areas guide the areas in which the strategy seeks to improve outcomes for people with disability. They are:

Economic security

People with disability have economic security, enabling them to plan for the future and exercise choice and control over their lives. Economic security can include things like having an income and having a job.

Inclusive and accessible communities

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

Rights protection, justice and legislation

People with disability feel safe and have their rights promoted, upheld and protected.

Personal and community support

People with disability, their families and carers have access to a range of wellcoordinated and effective disability services and supports that are appropriate for their needs.

Learning and support



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People with disability have opportunities to participate in high-quality education system that is responsive to their needs. People with disability have opportunities to continue learning throughout their lives in both formal and informal settings.

Health and wellbeing

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



Question 1

Do you have any comments on the vision and outcome areas being proposed for the new National Disability Strategy?

For example, you might like to provide advice on any specific issues within the outcome areas that you think need a particular focus in the next Strategy.

Please provide your response in space provided below (250 word limit).

Better Access Australia appreciates the opportunity to provide feedback on the Government's draft proposals for the next Strategy, as set out in the National Disability Strategy position paper. It supports the vision set out in the position paper ie "An inclusive Australian society that enables people with disability to fulfil their potential as equal members of the community."

Better Access Australia supports the six outcome areas in the position paper, and notes that these outcome areas were supported by stakeholders in the first round of consultations in 2019.

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

Note: The outcome areas for the next Strategy would continue to guide actions. It is also proposed they be the foundation for a new Outcomes Framework. The proposed Outcomes Framework would provide a clear and consistent approach across all levels of government to measure how effective mainstream and disability-specific services are at improving outcomes for people with disability. You will be able to have a say on a draft Outcomes Framework through a separate public submission process.

Guiding Principles

Guiding principles will help to guide governments when they design and deliver policies and programs. They will also guide the actions of the non-government and private sectors to ensure the inclusion of all people with disability. You can read more about the principles in the position paper on page 7.

In addition to the principles set out in [Article 3 of the UN CRPD](#), an agreed set of guiding principles could include:

- **Involve and engage:**



has the policy or program designer engaged with and listened to people with disability?

- **Design universally:**
have the principles of universal design been applied where possible?
- **Engage the broader community:**
how has the broader community been informed of, involved in and made responsible for removing barriers and supporting the inclusion of people with disability?
- **Address barriers faced by priority populations:**
how have the priority populations (noted by the National Disability Strategy) been identified? What action has been taken to specifically address the barriers they may experience?
- **Support carers and supporters:** how have the needs of the family, carers and circles of information and formal support for the person with disability been considered?

The new Strategy must include ways to make sure different types of organisations and individuals adhere to the guiding principles, including ensuring they understand and can effectively use the principles. This could be done through:

- training and information sharing by people with disability who have lived experience
- providing clear information about what each principle means
- sharing case studies of how organisations or programs are applying the principles in action
- a checklist for organisations of the steps they could take to put the principles into action.

Question 2:

What do you think about the guiding principles proposed here?

In responding to this question you might like to think about:

- Are there other principles that would help ensure policies and programs are right for people with disability, their family and carers?
- What information or guidance could help organisations to use and adhere to these principles?

Please provide your response in space provided below (250 word limit).

Better Access Australia supports the draft guiding principles as useful tools to guide the development of policy and programs by a range of government and non-government organisations. In particular, it supports the principle of *Involve and Engage: has the policy process or program design engaged with and listened to people with disability at all stages of planning and implementation and provided accessible information and opportunities for*



feedback? This principle aligns with the BAA's view that consumers and stakeholders must be an integral part of policy and program design and implementation.

Better Access Australia also supports the principle of engaging the broader community in supporting the inclusion of, and removing the barriers for, people with disability. We support the active promotion of the participation and inclusion of all groups, with a 'no wrong door' approach to systems, services and programs.

We also note that carers and supporters are a critical element in the economic and social participation of people with disability and support the principle that the needs of the whole family, care circle and supporters must be considered in policy and program design.

In terms of how this is done, Better Access Australia believes that the strategy needs to refocus its implementation approach from the 'let me tell you' narrative to a 'this is how it's done' approach. The strategy should be more direct, moving its starting assumption from we need to educate employers about how people with disability can contribute to the workforce, to one which is focused on here's how a person with disability or their carers fit within your workforce. The 'hearts and minds' approach can only go so far, employers need to understand how people with disability support outcomes for their businesses. See question 3 below about why this is the perfect opportunity to do this.

A stronger focus on community attitudes

In the first stage of consultations, people with disability said one of the biggest barriers they face in fully participating in society is community attitudes. This includes in professional and community life.

If community attitudes improved, they said this would help to improve their employment opportunities, financial security, access and involvement in the community.

All levels of government and all parts of the community share the responsibility to shape positive and disability-inclusive attitudes. We all play a part in helping people with disability to fully participate as equal members of the community.

A key focus of the new Strategy will aim to support and foster ongoing attitudinal change across Australian communities so that we harness the rich contribution people with disability make to our society.



Question 3

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

Please provide your response in space provided below (250 word limit).

Better Access Australia supports the increased focus on community attitudes to help overcome barriers to participation faced by people with disability, but believe that this needs to go further. As the position paper notes, this is particularly important for people with disability who are searching for a job, or who need support to retain a job.

Better Access Australia believes that the issues of perception and stigma about disability have been well known for many years now, and that existing approaches proposed in this strategy have made some, but not enough headway in the broader community.

It is time to be ambitious. Its time to leverage the changed work environment brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic and the accessibility and affordability of technology to rethink the work landscape for people with disabilities and their carers.

This strategy must support and prepare people with disability in this new environment to better participate. This strategy should be asking the question - How can this strategy reframe the work proposition for employees, thereby opening up new opportunities for people with disability, and those who care for people with disability?

It is time to be bold in the development of programs that drive workforce participation through capitalising on the changing paradigm of work.

The following questions relate to the goal of strengthening accountability in the new Strategy.

Clearly describing roles and responsibilities

All Australians have a role to play in achieving an inclusive Australian community.

The new Strategy will **strengthen accountability**. It includes a proposal to **clearly describe the roles and responsibilities** for disability policy and service delivery in Australia.

This includes the responsibilities of different levels of government and non-government organisations, such as community services and the private sector.



The Strategy proposes to bring together a range of publicly available information into one spot. The information would clarify governments' roles and responsibilities for:

- supporting people with disability
- supporting NDIS participants
- supporting the people with disability in Australia who are not eligible for the NDIS.

Question 4

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

Please provide your response in space provided below (250 word limit).

Better Access Australia supports greater clarity of information regarding responsibility for services by different levels of government. The issue of aged care in Victoria during the COVID-19 pandemic shows how critical it is for governments at all levels to be clear, transparent and accountable about roles and responsibilities, and how problematic it can be when this clarity and accountability is lacking.

Systemic issues such as the divide between Commonwealth and state/territory funding and management responsibilities, integration between mainstream health and other care sectors and potential trade-offs between health outcomes and the economy are all critical and current debates.

However, Better Access Australia also views the problem as not just a lack of clear information on government responsibilities, but is also a matter of structural barriers that arise when people seek to transfer or move between different systems – for example, between the mainstream health system, National Disability Insurance Scheme, income support and employment support systems, as well as services providing mental health support, transport, housing, justice and other government services.

It is the intersection between systems where many problems arise for people with disability (and others); and where vulnerable people are at most of risk of falling between the cracks. This is why Better Access Australia considers the 'no wrong door' approach as especially crucial for people with disability who access many different services.



Question 5

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

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

For example, you might like to suggest a way the Strategy could better guide non-government organisations to improve inclusion and equity for people with disability. This could include their role in communities, the workplace, or as part of delivering services.

Please provide your response in space provided below (250 word limit).

Better Access Australia believes that our health and social services sectors work best when all parties - public, private and not-for-profit - engage in good faith with the existing systems and processes, and that each party's contribution is recognised and valued.

Better Access Australia supports the proposed outcomes framework being developed as part of the National Disability Strategy as a useful mechanism to hold governments and service providers to account for the outcomes being achieved by programs and services they are delivering to people with disability. Detailed and helpful guidance provided by government to help all organisations in scope – especially those smaller organisations without dedicated resources to enable them to track their clients' progress and outcomes – will be valuable.

Better Access Australia also supports the publication of data and information collected by governments under the National Disability Strategy, to support the principle of transparency and accountability, as well as to provide a high-quality evidence base for future policy and program development.

In terms of how the strategy could better guide non-government organisations, Better Access Australia notes its comments in relation to question 3 above - It is time to be bold in the development of programs that drive workforce participation through capitalising on the changing paradigm of work.



Reporting

Reporting is an important part of the Strategy's goal of **strengthening accountability** (refer position paper page 9).

Current strategy reporting is done through periodic implementation plans and progress reports. The Australian Government compiles these with input from state, territory and local governments. However, there are concerns this approach does not:

- **give people enough visibility of whether the Strategy is making a difference**
- **guide actions or hold governments accountable.**

Reviews and consultations have suggested more frequent and different types of reporting. For example, the Productivity Commission recommended a National Disability Report be prepared every two years. In consultations, many stakeholders suggested annual reporting.

The position paper suggests reporting options for the next Strategy may include:

- **the responsible Ministerial Council releasing an annual, public statement outlining government policy commitments to lift outcomes for people with disability**
- **a progress report to be published every two years that uses the new Strategy's Outcomes Framework to:**
 - **assess whether outcomes for people with disability are improving**
 - **identify government policy and program contributions towards achieving these outcomes for people with disability.**

Page 9 of the position paper contains more information about the proposed Outcomes Framework.

These reporting options could provide clearer information to the public on whether government policies and programs are making a difference for people with disability, rather than listing government activities without assessing whether these activities are effective.



Question 6

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

In providing a response to this question, you might like to think about:

- What type of reporting would help you know whether the lives of people with disability in Australia are improving?
- How often should reporting be done?

Please provide your response in space provided below (250 word limit).

Better Access Australia supports regular, transparent reporting by Government on outcomes achieved by all sectors under the auspices of the National Disability Strategy.

An annual public statement, followed by a more fulsome report every second year, would be useful for research and advocacy bodies, such as Better Access Australia.

As with any government reporting requirements, it will be important that reporting requirements collect the minimum useable data set and that each piece of data has been selected for a specific reporting purpose. It is also important that the minimum useable data set does not duplicate information that is collected by other government agencies, federal or state. In difficult COVID-19 business conditions, which are likely to have short, medium and long term impacts, regulator apathy to regulatory burden will quickly undo any attitudinal advances.

The following questions relate to the Strategy's goal of putting policy into action to achieve outcomes for people with disability through policy development and program design.

Targeted Action Plans to drive implementation

The current strategy had periodic implementation plans. The proposal for the new Strategy is for an **Outcomes Framework** and subsequent evaluations to provide a more coordinated and cohesive approach to measuring the effectiveness of programs people with disability use. All



governments could also work towards aligning their disability inclusion plans. Aligning timeframes would make implementation, reporting and review nationally consistent.

Targeted Action Plans are a specific proposal to improve implementation under the next Strategy (refer position paper page 11).

Governments would work with each other and the non-government sector on a particular topic, for a certain period of time, to make the improvements needed. The Targeted Action Plan would involve committing to delivering actions within a set timeframe. This would contribute to improving outcomes for people with disability.

What these Targeted Action Plans cover would be settled as part of implementation of the Strategy. They would allow the Strategy to respond and adapt to the changing needs of people with disability.

Question 7

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

In responding to this question, you might like to think about specific topics, areas or strategies you think Targeted Action Plans should focus on.

Please provide your response in space provided below (250 word limit).

Better Access Australia supports the introduction of Targeted Action Plans to better facilitate improved outcomes for all people with disability. As stated previously, Better Access Australia supports the principle that Australia's health, disability and social services systems work best when all parties, public, private and not-for-profit, engage in good faith with the existing systems and processes, and that each party's contribution is recognised and valued. Targeted Action Plans provide a concrete and implementable way of achieving this.

In developing these action plans, Better Access Australia believes that new thinking and new approaches need to be brought to the fore. Sector based 'how to' incubators which brings together people with disabilities, technology and business specialists and champion employers to build replicable solutions that can rolled out across sectors.



Engagement with people with disability

The first stage of consultation confirmed that people with disability expect to be more involved in disability policy development and program design (refer position paper page 11). Participants of stage 1 consultations said this would make policies and programs more effective.

It is proposed the next Strategy include an **Engagement Plan**. The Plan would state how governments will ensure people with disability can lead and shape disability policies, programs and services.

Question 8

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

When answering this question, you might like to provide advice about specific strategies or actions that could go into an engagement plan so that people with disability have more say in how the Strategy is monitored and delivered.

Please provide your response in space provided below (250 word limit).

Better Access Australia strongly recommends the continued engagement and collaboration with people with disability, community organisations, families and carers, research bodies and the private sector as the National Disability Plan is implemented.

We reiterate that consumer views on government policies and programs which affect them are invaluable in informing policy and implementation revisions and redirections as needed. Government must be responsive, adaptable and forward thinking, while maintaining a constant and high quality feedback loop with the community.

Better Access Australia looks forward to engaging further with the government on issues affecting people with disability and other health and social service matters.



Additional information

Stage 2 of the national disability strategy consultation process will inform:

specific sections in the next Strategy

how we will implement it.

Question 9

Is there anything else you would like to share about the ideas and proposals in the position paper?

Please provide your response in space provided below (1000 word limit).

As a not-for-profit policy, research and advocacy organisation, Better Access Australia is building its capability and research base in order to effectively influence better outcomes in the health, disability and social sectors.

At Better Access Australia, we believe that it is important to start now with a dual focus on improving access within the current systems while also framing the systems of the future. We believe that through our strong and persuasive advocacy we can support the delivery of a better social sector in Australia now, and in the future.

Better Access Australia supports the proposals and changes outlined in the draft position paper and hopes that the opportunity of the new National Disability Strategy is embraced as a chance to lay the foundation for new directions and approaches and thanks the Government for the opportunity to provide this submission.