



THE UNIVERSITY OF
SYDNEY

Centre for Disability Research and Policy

**Submission to the National Disability Strategy Stage 2
Consultation**



Submission

National Disability Strategy Stage 2 Consultation

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Centre for Disability Research and Policy
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Introduction

Thank you for the opportunity to respond to the National Disability Strategy Position Paper. The information contained in this response has been derived from our Centre's collective understanding of disability policy and involvement in programs and strategies that have resulted from the previous National Disability Strategy. We have also been involved in meetings with the Productivity Commission preparing for the new strategy. At the end of our response to questions there is also a general commentary section which includes discussion on the National Disability Strategy Position Paper which have been offered by a number of our undergraduate students that have been engaging in discussions on the National Disability Strategy with their Unit Coordinator Dr Kim Bulkeley.

Response to questions

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

As outcome areas these all have value, but what this approach to outcome areas misses, or may miss depending on how it is operationalised, is the connection that there is a, beyond all of this, the need for connected person-centred approaches, particularly for people with needs which are 'complex' and straddle domains. What we believe is needed is an outcome area which specifically addresses complex or intra-system collaboration – so that while the outcome for individuals is that their needs are met in one of these 6 outcomes areas, the more immediate outcome is integrated service/systems responses which are better designed to meet people's needs no matter which systems traditionally meet those needs.

Something else, which could be included here but isn't specifically and probably should is housing. More stable and appropriate housing/accommodation should be a specific outcome area.

Housing is only discussed once in the position paper and this indicates that it is not being viewed as a central part of the new strategy. Complex needs are not discussed at all, and this is a very significant gap and one that may continue if it is not expressly highlighted in some way.

A set of principles and questions should be used to guide the development of policy and design of programs by all levels of government and non-government organisations. What do you think about the guiding principles proposed here?

These principles are appropriate. The only one that could do with some work is the 'Design Universally' principle. There is some debate about whether you should be using 'universal design' or 'inclusive design' as a focus on 'universal design' is about design for as many people as possible and may miss more specific individualised needs that we are actually striving for. Universal approaches can sometimes not work with person-centred approaches, so you should consider going with 'inclusive design' rather than 'universal design'. Another approach which is more specific to disability is to encourage 'disability thinking' and for the NDS to encourage the development of processes that put disability into the thinking and design of all government policy and program implementation (and beyond), but the implementation of the NDS needs to consider (see below) what levers it has control over and be directed towards them.

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

This is very appropriate and necessary because governments often lack control over those areas where the most change needs to take place, for example creating a better employment market for people with disability.

Our research on Disability and Disadvantage, vocational education and training (VET) and employment in NSW found that while people with disability were being well trained in the VET system in NSW there were few employment opportunities available, and a barrier to that was poor disability confidence in employers and discrimination and stigma which impacts both employers and people with disability who may have less expectation of employment. That will only be addressed by a stronger emphasis on inclusion more broadly. Visibility of people with disability is key to improving community attitudes.

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?

This would help, but it will not deal with the problems of cross systems working and gaps that have arisen around different systems. A really good example is the NDIS. The NDIS is a very static 'object' within the service landscape because it has very strict boundaries around what services it is able to provide and this means that it cannot stretch into other areas. This means that it is up to other systems to make the connections for cross-sector working. Sometimes those systems lack capacity to do that 'stretching' across systems too, which means that people with very complex needs can end up not having needs met or coordinated. What is needed are processes which better connect systems, such as the Integrated Care Response (developed in NSW and now operating in QLD, ACT) and others which can help systems to work better to meet the needs of people in complex situations or with needs that stretch across system boundaries. Where systems are still poorly connected we need more than just to delineate responsibility – we actually need connectors in the system.

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

The NGO sector must have a role in improving outcomes for people with disability and there needs to be more effective mechanisms for NGOs to take on responsibility to work in collaborative ways for improving outcomes. One of the unfortunate outcomes of the new funding mechanisms in disability is the creation of a competitive market around disability, which means that NGOs may be motivated to compete rather than collaborate. So drivers for collaborative working for systems change need to be included in the NDS.

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?

There needs to be reporting of targets and progress to implementing them across different areas. This should not only list success at meeting targets, but give an indication of what has worked to meet targets in different areas so that success in one area can be used to drive success in those areas that are still struggling to meet targets. An internal dashboard for relevant government agencies updated monthly, with 6 monthly or annual public reporting may work.

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)?

This would be a good approach as long as the Targeted areas were appropriate and feasible and they do not drive perverse incentives. Governments need to ensure that the action plans are meaningful across regions and groups and do not mean that action in other areas is not prioritised.

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

The engagement plan needs to make sure that it looks to including people with disability which may be sometimes left out of engagement because of the nature of their disability or the communities that they are a part of, so it needs to engage beyond existing easily accessible groups or individuals who are included all the time. An example is people with communication needs, with complex participation needs and psychosocial disability, people who live in rural and remote communities or people from diverse cultural backgrounds.

General comments from students on the NDS Position Paper

Our undergraduate students at the University of Sydney from the Disability and Participation major have also added the following more general comments on the National Disability Strategy Position Paper. We have not edited these comments and they are included in full here:

"I feel as though creating an inclusive and accessible community can greatly increase inclusion and participation. Disability is largely a social construct and having inaccessible infrastructure, draws a spotlight on people with a disability which leads to negative community attitudes. Perhaps by ensuring all communities have adequate accessibility infrastructure (hearing loops, ramps, etc) we can build a more seamless experience for people with a disability, allowing them to feel more comfortable being in the community."

"The government could address negative attitudes to people with a disability by reducing the stigma around disability. One thing I noticed recently is that there aren't many ads with people with disability unless they are support work related. I noticed this because I saw an ad for Petbarn where there were many dogs and one of them had an equipment with wheels for its hind legs, but it looked happy and ran as fast as the other dogs. Addressing ableism may be one way to get people to start noticing disability and increase communication around it."

"I think that normalisation via exposure is the best way forward. As anyone who's spent time around children knows it doesn't take much to accept/embrace someone who is different from them, as long as they can ask questions to satisfy their curiosity/ misunderstanding. As we get older we're not so easily empathetic, so while it may take more time the theory still holds. Address ableism through exposure and open dialogue."

"* Breaking the cycle of those that fall through the gaps of services (to help alleviate the pity/avoidance from onlookers) * Representation in media & pop culture * Empowering people's disability identity (similar to how the gay pride movement increased Australia's societal acceptance of LGBTQI, marriage equality etc) * Diversity & Inclusion in education & curriculum * Employment - quotas or goals * Community involvement & inclusion in volunteer activities, sporting and recreation another point from our group > positives from covid19 accessibility to services, employment, products and entertainment - has enabled people who may have not had easy access to this in the past - can have a concert broadcast on their ipads from their bedrooms, or telehealth appointments, etc.."

"Media - increase funding to organisations like Screenability to fund people with a disability to make shows, then partner with Netflix, mainstream TV networks to screen those shows Increase the number of actors with disabilities in film and TV, could be addressed by partnering with screenwriting organisations and TV/streaming networks that commission work Education - mandate education in the Australian Curriculum on topics like human rights and the law, disability and inclusion, inclusive and discriminatory language and the difference between medical model and social model of disability. Quotas to require workplaces hire people with disabilities - there are pros and cons Pros - quotas have been used successfully to address gender equity and increase the number of women in leadership positions in organisations and politics Cons - could be tokenistic, could lead to someone who is not qualified or the best person for a job being hired leading to a poor outcome, could cause resentment in workplaces which is counterproductive to improving community attitudes towards people with disabilities."

"I like that the National Disability strategy paper discusses the improvements that can be made to implement the new strategy. It is important to engage the broader community in supporting the inclusion of people with disabilities. This could possibly be done by providing education resources on the positive impact other businesses have had from employing people with disabilities."

"I like how the discussion paper addresses the changing landscape of disability. As we saw a few weeks ago society's attitude towards individuals with disability has vastly changed through time. I think the possible inclusion of a quota for people with a disability in the workplace could increase inclusion. This could simultaneously address community attitudes as people in the workplace would have to interact with individuals with a disability which will make people less afraid of talking to someone with a disability in the possible future."

About the Centre for Disability Research and Policy

The Centre for Disability Research and Policy (CDRP) at the Faculty of Health Sciences of the University of Sydney aims to change the disadvantage that occurs for people with disabilities. We do this through addressing their social and economic participation in society, and their health and wellbeing. By focusing on data that demonstrates disadvantage, we can develop models of policy and practice to better enable support and opportunity for people with disabilities.

CDRP website: <https://www.sydney.edu.au/medicine-health/our-research/research-centres/centre-for-disability-research-and-policy.html>