

8 July 2022

Disability Advocacy Secretariat
Department of Social Services

Delivered by email to disabilityadvocacysecretariat@dss.gov.au

Dear Disability Advocacy secretariat

We appreciate the opportunity to contribute to this consultation on the draft for a new National Disability Advocacy Framework 2022-2025 (the Framework).

Our disability advocacy organisation, People with Disability Australia, would like to add our support to the submission by Disability Advocacy Network Australia (DANA) on the draft Framework and what is needed to realise its intended Outcomes.

We would like to add particular emphasis to the following, as being fundamental to achieving the outcomes of the Framework, as well as needing to be addressed in the Disability Advocacy Work Plan:

1. Increased Commonwealth and State/Territory coordination, including funding and administrative systems, to increase access, efficiency, and improved outcomes for people with disability.

Currently, People with Disability Australia's funding from state governments such as the NSW Government, precludes our individual advocates funded by the NSW Government to engage in matters that are of Commonwealth responsibility.

In practice, it is very difficult for individual advocates to provide full advocacy support if we have to choose which issues can be supported.

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There must be no wrong door, as people with disability who have complex presentations or long-term support needs will be left behind. To address this, we need better coordination of funding mechanisms between the two levels of government, so independent advocates are free to support all clients equally.

2. Service capacity enhancement and sector development.

There is a strong need to increase the capacity of disability advocacy services to meet the demand from clients, while also ensuring all services are equipped to meet the needs of clients in a timely and consistent manner regardless of complexity.

Key to achieving this is the professionalisation of a suitably skilled, qualified, and experienced workforce, with structures in place that promote the development of objective, evidence-based standards to oversee direct practice.

Lastly, the sector must assume clients have decision-making capacity, and so the professionalisation of the sector should also include equipping advocates with the skills to support effective decision-making by clients, as well as educating clients on how to navigate systems in the future.

3. Increased community awareness of, and enhanced access to, advocacy for people with disability.

At present, People with Disability Australia experiences issues attracting clients from culturally and linguistically diverse and First Nations backgrounds.

To enhance access to advocacy for people with disability from these backgrounds, we need to ensure disability advocacy services are culturally safe.

This can be achieved by developing partnerships and creating and implementing shared decision-making mechanisms, to support the design and implementation of disability advocacy services that resonate with these communities.

In addition, increased community awareness of advocacy in these communities is needed, but increased community awareness must be delivered in formats and languages that will speak to these communities.

To support efforts to increase community awareness, there should also be a comprehensive and well-resourced outreach and communication strategy co-designed with the disability advocacy sector. Currently, funding through the National Disability Advocacy Program (NDAP) is not sufficient to undertake meaningful outreach work, even though it is sorely needed.



4. Strengthen the inclusion and involvement of people with disability in decision-making, co-design and organisational governance.

There is a current gap in dedicated funding for advocacy and disability representative organisations to support increasing the capacity of people with disability in self-advocacy and advocacy skills, leadership and representation, and participating in advisory and decision-making processes, including in the community, public and private sectors and at all levels of government.

People with disability have expertise that is currently not being harnessed, let alone leveraged, to improve the capacity of other people with disability to assert their rights.

We urge the Disability Reform Ministers and their respective governments to prioritise this work and make strong commitments on disability advocacy funding and collaboration to help realise the vision of Australia's Disability Strategy 2021-31, the National Disability Insurance Scheme and foster an Australia that includes and values people with disability and respects human rights for all.

If you would like to discuss the content of this letter, please direct correspondence to my Senior Manager of Policy, Giancarlo de Vera, at giancarlo@pwd.org.au or on 0413 135 731.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Sebastian Zagarella', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Sebastian Zagarella
Chief Executive Officer
People with Disability Australia