



Creating
an inclusive
community
together

Australia's Disability Strategy Review

Discussion Paper
August 2024

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Acknowledgements

Acknowledgement of Country

The Australian Government Department of Social Services acknowledges Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples throughout Australia and their continuing connection to land, water, culture and community. We pay our respects to the Elders both past and present.

Language in this discussion paper

We acknowledge that people use different words to talk about disability and that each person will have a way of talking about disability and about themselves that they like best. Some people like to use 'disabled person' (identity-first language), while some like to use 'person with disability' (person-first language), and some are fine with using either.

We use person-first language to talk about disability. This means we usually use the term 'person with disability' in this Report.

The language used in this Report is not intended to diminish an individual's identity as a person with disability. We recognise that the appropriate use of language varies between individuals and disability communities. We acknowledge the importance of having conversations with individuals about their preferred language.

Introduction

About Australia's Disability Strategy

[Australia's Disability Strategy 2021–2031](#) (ADS) is Australia's national disability policy framework that was launched on 3 December 2021. ADS reflects our shared, national commitment to an inclusive society that ensures the more than one in five Australians with disability can fulfil their potential, as equal members of the community.

ADS sets out our plan for continuing to improve the lives of people with disability in Australia. ADS provides priorities for governments at all levels to drive change to uphold the rights, inclusion, and participation of people with disability in all areas of Australian life.

Since the launch of ADS, we have seen significant progress in setting up the structures that support the delivery, accountability and transparency of ADS. We have delivered our first tranche of [Targeted Action Plans](#), established and expanded [ADS Advisory Council](#), and held two public [ADS Forums](#). Public reporting against ADS [Outcomes Framework](#) measures has commenced, with the results from ADS Survey on Community Attitudes reported for the first time in late 2023, and the first ADS [Implementation Report](#) was tabled in the Australian Parliament on 30 November 2023. This is in addition to the important work being undertaken by jurisdictions in developing and delivering their own disability and inclusion plans.

We have committed to being transparent and accountable on where we have been driving action and those areas where there is more work to do. ADS had always committed to review ADS upon the release of the Disability Royal Commission's Final Report.

Review context

The conclusion of inquiry by the Disability Royal Commission and the release of its Final Report marks a pivotal turning point for disability reform in Australia. The Disability Royal Commission's [Final Report](#) was released on 29 September 2023. The Disability Royal Commission made 222 recommendations, including recommendations directed at ADS. The Final Report recommended governments review and update ADS by the end of 2024.

The vision of ADS is for an inclusive Australian society that ensures people with disability can fulfil their potential, as equal members of the community. To make this a reality, we need to make sure ADS is working as planned, and if there are new things that should be part of ADS.

We have started making a draft Review Report, including draft Findings and Recommendations. Our draft Findings and Recommendations identify where we can make practical changes to ADS implementation mechanisms, to improve the processes and governance of ADS. The draft Review Report has drawn on a variety of sources, including feedback received from ADS Advisory Council, Disability Representative Organisations (DROs), people with disability, and their carers and support networks since the launch of ADS.

Through this work, we have also identified a set of topics we think are the most important to people with disability, related to ADS Outcome Areas and Policy Priorities. We will defer some potential reforms under ADS until the Independent Evaluation of ADS in 2025-26. This will give people with disability time and opportunities to be involved in the development and implementation of reforms to ADS.

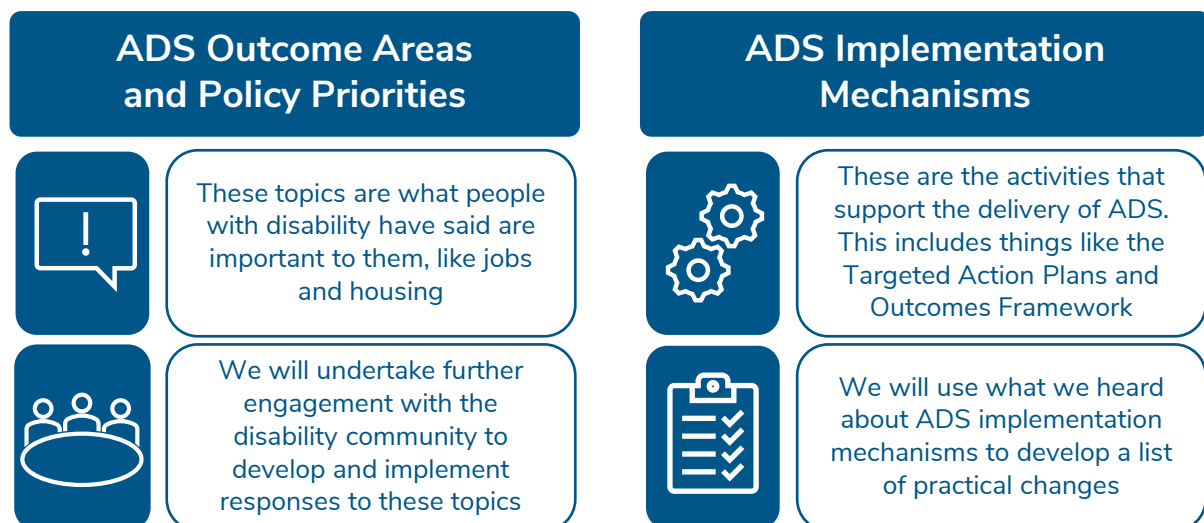


FIGURE 1: ADS COMPONENTS AND REVIEW ACTIONS

Purpose of this discussion paper

We have an ongoing commitment to involve people with disability and their representative organisations in matters that affect them.

ADS Review is focused on identifying practical, process improvements we can make now. We have developed draft Findings and Recommendations based on the feedback we have received. We want to know what you think of these draft Findings and Recommendations, and how we could improve them.

We want you to add your voice to the Review of ADS. We want to know how ADS Review can make practical changes now, and what is important to you. To help you in preparing your submission, this discussion paper includes questions on ADS implementation mechanisms and Outcome Areas.

How you can participate in the Review

The Review's consultation process will be open to the public from **9am Thursday 8 August** until **5pm Friday 6 September 2024 (AEST)**.

During this time, you are invited to share your ideas and experiences via the DSS Engage platform. Here you will be able to respond to guided, short-form questions. In providing your submission, you may wish to respond to all the questions or choose to answer only the questions of most interest to you.

Alternatively, you can:

- Lodge a written submission via email to ADSReview@dss.gov.au.
- Write to us at:
ADS Branch: ADS Review
Department of Social Services
GPO Box 9820
Canberra, ACT 2601

When sharing your ideas and experiences, you are encouraged to refer to this discussion paper and other [ADS documents](#).

If you have any questions about making a submission, please email ADSReview@dss.gov.au.

Your Views

People with disability are the experts on their lives, and we rely on this expertise to guide our work.

This section outlines our draft Findings and Recommendations for ADS, and what we have heard is important to people with disability under ADS Outcome Areas. As such, it is not intended to present a consensus view and is designed to promote further discussion. This means it may not include all views presented by the disability community or be representative of all people and organisations that are part of the disability community.

To help you in preparing your submission to the Review, this discussion paper includes questions on ADS implementation mechanisms and Outcome Areas.

Key Questions

Implementation Mechanisms

- Do you think the current implementation of ADS is effective?
- How could we improve implementation of ADS?
- How could people with disability be more involved in the implementation of ADS?
- We have developed [draft Findings and Recommendations](#). Do you agree with these draft Findings and Recommendations?
- What would you change about the draft Findings and Recommendations?
- How should ADS take action on the draft Findings and Recommendations?

Outcome Areas and Policy Priorities

- ADS has 7 Outcome Areas. Do you think the Outcome Areas still represent what is most important to people with disability?
- How could we improve the Outcome Areas of ADS?
- How could people with disability be more involved in ADS Outcome Areas and Policy Priorities?
- We have identified [a list of topics](#) related to ADS Outcome Areas. Do you agree these topics should be priorities for future work under ADS?
- How should ADS take action on these topics?

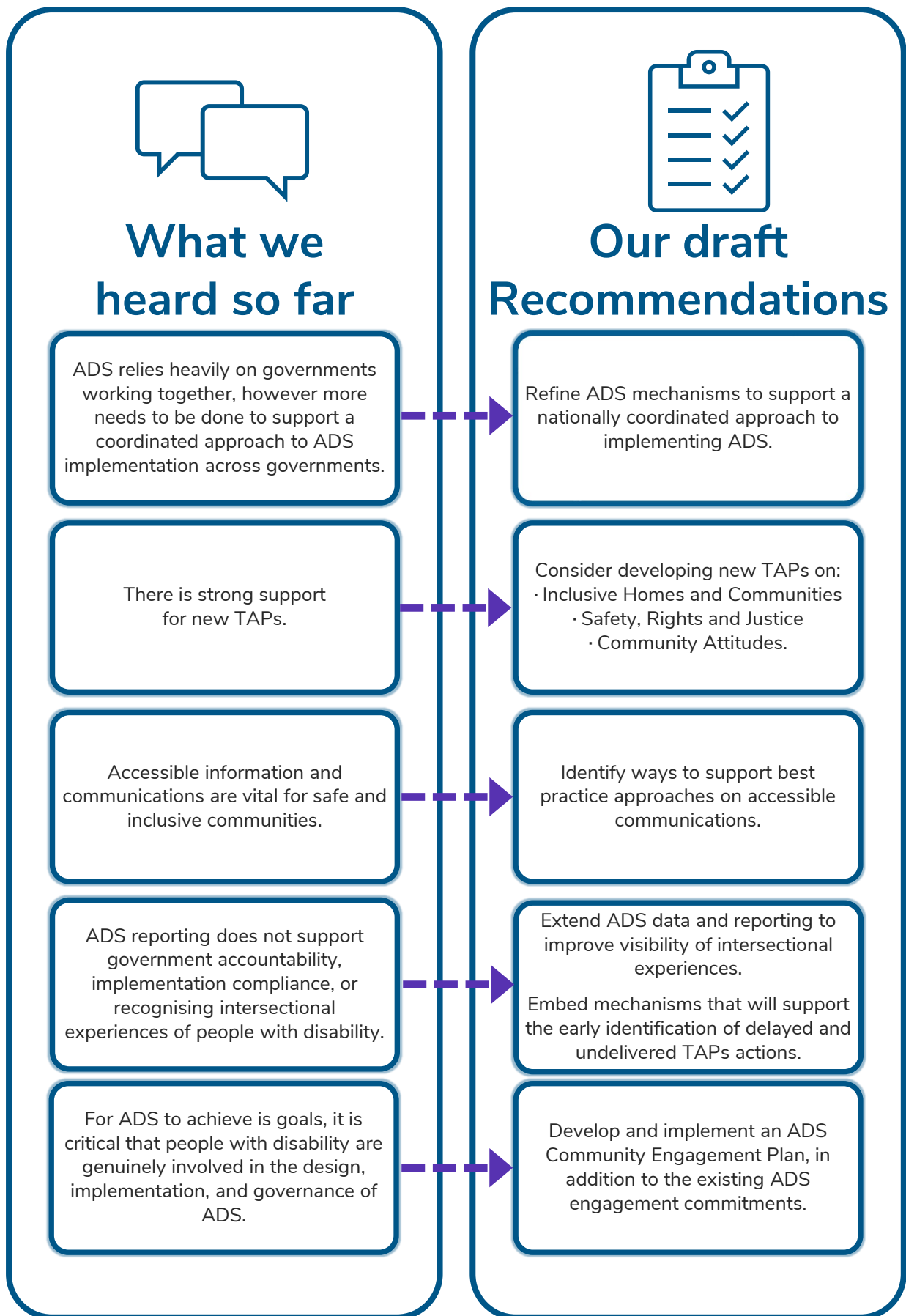


FIGURE 2: WHAT WE HEARD AND ADS REVIEW RECOMMENDATIONS

Australia's Disability Strategy: Implementation Mechanisms

Draft Finding 1: More needs to be done to support a coordinated approach to ADS implementation across governments

The success of ADS relies on governments working together. ADS has some mechanisms to support a coordinated approach, like the Targeted Action Plans (TAPs). But ADS is affected when governments take action (or inaction) different to others.

The Disability Royal Commission said there needs to be greater coordination across all levels of government. Implementing ADS needs a consistent and coordinated approach across government. The disability community have said it is important that there is improved coordination and alignment across government.

Draft Recommendation:

Refine ADS mechanisms to support a nationally coordinated approach to implementing ADS.

We could do this by limiting the number of ADS TAPs. This would focus governments' efforts on the highest priority issues. New TAPs would have a maximum of 8 actions and would exclude existing commitments.

Discussion Questions:

- What do you think about how governments are working together to deliver ADS?
- ADS is made up of lots of parts; do some parts of ADS need more coordination?
- Do you agree with our draft Recommendation and how we might do it? What would you change?

Draft Finding 2: There is strong support for new Targeted Action Plans

We know there is strong interest for new [TAPs](#). Much of what we have heard about TAPs was about identifying topics for new TAPs. The disability community identified housing, early childhood, education, older people, and many other areas as topics for new TAPs.

But we also acknowledge there must be greater coordination in implementing the TAPs. ADS Advisory Council has told us that the next TAPs are an opportunity to be more ambitious. They proposed the new TAPs directly link to enabling and embedding system-wide change.

Draft Recommendation:

Consider developing new TAPs on:

- Inclusive Homes and Communities
- Safety, Rights and Justice
- Community Attitudes.

We could develop new TAPs in partnership with state and territory governments. We would release the new TAPs by 3 December 2024.

We think TAPs reporting also needs work, which is addressed in the Reporting Recommendation.

Discussion questions:

- How effective are the current TAPs?
- Do you agree that the proposed TAPs represent priorities for action?
- Do you agree with our draft Recommendation and how we might do it? What would you change?

Draft Finding 3: Accessible information and communications are vital for safe and inclusive communities

Accessible information and communications are critical for the safety, independence, and inclusion of people with disability. Appropriate information, provided in a variety of formats, supports the empowerment of people with disability by ensuring they can make their own choices about the services and supports that best suit them.

Currently under ADS there are not clear requirements to promote accessible information and communications other than the Guiding Principles. We recognise that the lack of a coherent series of standards is something people with disability have raised.

Draft Recommendation:

Identify ways to support best practice approaches on accessible communications.

Discussion questions:

- Do you agree that accessible communications is a priority for long-term action?
- Do you agree with our draft Recommendation? What would you change?

Draft Finding 4: ADS reporting does not support government accountability, implementation compliance, or recognising intersectional experiences of people with disability

Transparent reporting and monitoring mechanisms help hold governments to account. ADS reporting includes:

- Annual reports for [TAPs](#) and the [Outcomes Framework](#)
- Two-yearly [implementation reports](#), tabled in the Australian Parliament
- A [data dashboard](#) tool.

We are also planning for independent evaluations of ADS in 2025 and 2029, with their reports to be provided to government in 2026 and 2030.

The disability community says there needs to be more transparency in ADS reporting. We have also heard that ADS data should represent intersectional experiences. The Disability Royal Commission agrees ADS data should include intersectional cohorts.

Some have also said that we need better reporting to manage the TAPs. Improved reporting would support us to manage delayed and undelivered TAPs actions better.

Draft Recommendations:

Extend ADS data and reporting to improve visibility of intersectional experiences.

Embed mechanisms that will support the early identification of delayed and undelivered TAPs actions.

We could do this by working towards disaggregated data collection and reporting through the Outcomes Framework, and other ADS reporting. We could also develop more robust reporting for TAPs.

Discussion questions:

- What do you think about how we currently report on ADS?
- We report on lots of things; what reporting do you think should be the priority to lead improvement?
- Do you agree with our draft Recommendations and how we could do it? What would you change?

Draft Finding 5: For ADS to achieve its goals, it is critical that people with disability are genuinely involved in the design, implementation, and governance of ADS

We are committed to people with disability taking a central and active role in ADS. In our Review, what we heard about most is that engaging with people with disability is really important. The disability community have told us they want disability reforms informed by genuine engagement.

[ADS Engagement Plan](#) outlines how people with disability are involved in ADS. This includes yearly ADS Forums and ADS Advisory Council. We also engage on ADS reporting and when planning for big ADS events.

We are proposing providing people with disability more ADS engagement opportunities. This would support people with disability to contribute to ADS in a more meaningful way.

Draft Recommendation:

Develop and implement an ADS Community Engagement Plan, in addition to the existing ADS engagement commitments.

We could develop and hold Community Engagement activities that will inform and complement the broader work of ADS Engagement Plan. We could also undertake stronger community campaigns to improve public knowledge and awareness of ADS.

Discussion Questions:

- What do you think about how we currently engage with people with disability about ADS?
- How could people with disability be more engaged about ADS?
- Do you agree with our draft Recommendation and how we could do it? What would you change?

Australia's Disability Strategy: Outcome Areas and Policy Priorities

Through our work on the Review, we have identified [a set of topics](#) related to ADS Outcome Areas. From our analysis, we think that these are topics people with disability want government to prioritise.

We want to know what you think about these topics, and to tell us what you think about ADS Outcome Areas and Policy Priorities.

We will use what we have heard, and what we are hearing now, about ADS Outcome Areas and Policy Priorities to inform future engagement. This will support us, in partnership with people with disability, to develop effective responses to the topics identified.

The following section does not cover every Outcome Area or Policy Priority of ADS. Rather, it concentrates on what we have heard is important to people with disability.



FIGURE 3: OUTCOME AREAS IDENTIFIED AS IMPORTANT TO PEOPLE WITH DISABILITY

Outcome Area: Economic and financial security

Transition from education to employment

Employment barriers

We recognise having a job is important. This Outcome Area commits governments to increase employment of people with disability. The [Employment TAP](#) and [Employ My Ability](#) have actions to increase employment of people with disability. They also have actions to improve the transition from education to employment.

People with disability have told us there needs to be more targeted support to improve the transition from education to employment, and support for students to finish their university studies. Some have proposed nationally consistent post-school transition support.

People with disability have said there are still significant barriers to employment. The Disability Royal Commission identified four main barriers to open employment: attitudinal, organisational, structural, and physical barriers.

Discussion questions:

- Do you agree that addressing employment barriers and post-school transitions should be priorities for future work under ADS?
- How should ADS take action to decrease employment barriers?
- How should ADS take action to improve post-school transitions?
- In what other ways could we improve this Outcome Area?

Outcome Area: Inclusive homes and communities

Housing

During the development of ADS, people with disability told us improvements to housing was important to them. This led to an increased focus on housing in ADS. Available data does not reveal if this focus has improved housing outcomes for people with disability.

The disability community has said we need to increase accessible and affordable housing. We have heard people with disability face significant barriers in accessing a home, and that more needs to be done to increase the availability of accessible homes.

We have heard about different approaches to how ADS should take action on housing. The Productivity Commission has proposed developing a housing TAP under ADS, while the Disability Royal Commission has recommended we include homelessness as an ADS Policy Priority.

Discussion questions:

- Do you agree that addressing housing should be a priority for future work under ADS?
- How should ADS take action towards improving housing outcomes?
- In what other ways could we improve this Outcome Area?

Outcome Area: Safety, rights and justice

Disability rights and legislation

Violence against women and girls with disability

Criminal justice system

ADS plays an important role in protecting, promoting, and realising the human rights of people with disability.

The Disability Royal Commission recognises governments have taken positive steps to support the human rights of people with disability. But it also said that there are opportunities to improve ADS' approach to human rights. The disability community has told us to strengthen human rights legislation.

This Outcome Area includes a Policy Priority aimed at preventing violence. The disability community has told us they are concerned about the high rates of gendered violence experienced by women and girls with disability.

People with disability are over-represented at all stages of the criminal justice system. First Nations people with disability have even further over-representation in the criminal justice system. People with disability have told us they are concerned about the 'criminalisation of disability' and how it encourages negative stereotypes.

Discussion questions:

- Do you agree that addressing disability rights, violence against women and girls with disability, and the criminal justice system should be priorities for future work under ADS?
- How should ADS take action on improving disability rights?
- How should ADS take action towards eliminating violence against women and girls with disability?
- How should ADS take action to address the criminal justice system response to people with disability?
- In what other ways could we improve this Outcome Area?

Outcome Area: Personal and community support

The disability ecosystem

This Outcome Area is centred on people with disability having access to the supports that meet their needs. This includes formal supports (such as NDIS and Home Care Packages), as well as informal and mainstream supports. We call this spectrum of supports the disability ecosystem. The NDIS Review encourages us to create a unified disability ecosystem of supports for all people with disability.

However, the NDIS Review claims that ADS is not doing enough to make mainstream services accessible and inclusive. Similarly, some people with disability have said ADS is not improving access to services and support for people with disability who are not eligible for the NDIS.

Discussion questions

- Do you agree that the disability ecosystem should be a priority for future work under ADS?
- How could ADS take action towards improving the disability ecosystem?
- In what other ways could we improve this Outcome Area?

Outcome Area: Education and learning

Inclusive education

We know that education is important to life-long outcomes of people with disability. People with disability have told us more needs to be done to improve inclusion in the education system. This could be through increased resourcing, attitudinal change, and professional development for educators.

The Disability Royal Commission have said that many students with disability continue to be denied an inclusive, high-quality education. The Disability Royal Commission has proposed an education reform agenda, but it will take several years to achieve.

In the meantime, the Disability Royal Commission has proposed we develop a National Roadmap to Inclusive Education. This has some support from the disability community. Other people have proposed a national plan aligned to ADS or an ADS TAP focused on inclusive education.

Discussion questions:

- Do you agree that inclusive education should be a priority for future work under ADS?
- How should ADS take action towards achieving inclusive education?
- In what other ways could we improve this Outcome Area?

Outcome Area: Health and wellbeing

Accessible and inclusive health, allied health, and mental health services

Experiencing good health is a fundamental requirement for a good life. People with disability have told us that although Australia generally has a good healthcare system, this does not always translate into good outcomes for people with disability.

The Disability Royal Commission said that many people with disability are denied access to healthcare on an equal basis to people with disability. People with disability have said that negative attitudes and discrimination have limited their access to healthcare, diagnosis, and decision-making about their own health. The disability community has told us that disability awareness and accessibility need to improve across the healthcare system.

Discussion questions

- Do you agree that the health, allied health, and mental health services should be a priority for future work under ADS?
- How should ADS take action towards improving health, allied health, and mental health services?
- In what other ways could we improve this Outcome Area?

Outcome Area: Community attitudes

Discrimination and disability awareness

Authentic representation

Leadership

Improving community attitudes increases other opportunities in life. How we can improve community attitudes can be approached through many different means. This may include increasing disability awareness, authentic representation, and leadership by people with disability.

The Disability Royal Commission has recommendations for eliminating discrimination and increasing disability awareness for a range of professions. Some have suggested these recommendations do not go far enough.

People with disability have told us it's important to see real and genuine people with disability. This idea of authentic representation applies to the media, entertainment, and public life. People with disability have said that media representation can often feel tokenistic or inauthentic. Improving the public representation of people with disability will encourage respect and inclusion.

ADS includes a Policy Priority focused on increasing the representation of people with disability in leadership roles. Recognising its importance, an initial ADS TAP focuses on community attitudes, including leadership. However, the disability community says more needs to be done to remove the barriers to leadership roles.

Discussion questions:

- Do you agree that discrimination and disability awareness, authentic representation, and leadership should be priorities for future work under ADS?
- How should ADS take action towards eliminating discrimination?
- How should ADS take action towards promoting authentic representation?
- How should ADS take action towards increasing leadership by people with disability?
- In what other ways could we improve this Outcome Area?

What Next?

We will analyse what people with disability tell us through this engagement activity. We will use this information to refine our draft Findings and Recommendations.

We will publish a Consultation Report in September 2024. The Consultation Report will let everyone know the outcomes of our engagement activities. The report will include how feedback from people with disability has contributed to the final ADS Review Report.

The final ADS Review Report will include our Findings and Recommendation for ADS. We will provide the final ADS Review Report to the Disability Reform Ministerial Council for endorsement. Pending their approval, we will release the updated ADS on 3 December 2024. We will publish the updated ADS on [ADS Hub on Disability Gateway](#).



FIGURE 4: ADS REVIEW STAGES

We will use what we have heard, and what we are hearing now, about ADS Outcome Areas and Policy Priorities to inform future engagement with the disability community to develop and implement appropriate and effective responses to those topics.

We will undertake further engagement with the disability community as part of existing planned events such as the 2024 State Forum, 2025 ADS National Forum, 2025-26 ADS Evaluation engagements and additional activities through the proposed ADS Community Engagement Plan.

This will support us, in partnership with people with disability, to develop and implement responses to improve outcomes for people with disability.

We will defer some potential reforms under ADS until the Independent Evaluation of ADS in 2025-26. The Independent Evaluation will focus on the outcomes achieved against ADS' Policy Priorities and Vision and include a much more significant and broad ranging consultation component.

With more time, the 2025-26 Independent Evaluation will have the potential for a wider range of data and insights, greater engagement with people with disability and their representative organisations, and research into more complex issues. This will give people with disability time and opportunities to be involved in the development and implementation of reforms to ADS.

To stay up to date on ADS, including future engagement opportunities, visit [ADS Hub on Disability Gateway](#).

Key Terms

TABLE 1: KEY TERMS

Term	Meaning
ADS	<p>Australia's Disability Strategy 2021-2031</p> <p>ADS is Australia's national disability policy framework. It is driving action at all levels of government to improve the lives of people with disability. ADS launched on 3 December 2021.</p>
Advisory Council	<p>Australia's Disability Strategy Advisory Council</p> <p>The Advisory Council advises Australian governments and Disability Ministers on the implementation of ADS.</p>
AIHW	<p>Australian Institute of Health and Welfare</p> <p>The AIHW is an independent statutory Australian Government agency producing authoritative and accessible information and statistics to inform and support better policy and service delivery decisions, leading to better health and wellbeing for all Australians. The AIHW reports on ADS Outcomes Framework, including annual reports and data updates.</p>
Associated Plan	<p>Australia's Disability Strategy Associated Plans</p> <p>Associated Plans have a longer-term focus (generally three to ten years) on high-level priorities for specific cohorts. Associated Plans clearly identify how they contribute to achieving the outcomes of ADS and may include ADS branding.</p>
Co-design	<p>Co-design</p> <p>A design process where stakeholders are equal partners and take leadership roles in the design of products, services, systems, policies, laws, and research.</p>
DDA	<p>Disability Discrimination Act 1992</p> <p>The DDA is national legislation that makes discrimination on the basis of disability unlawful in a broad range of areas of public life. This includes education, and access to premises, goods, services, and facilities.</p>
DIP	<p>Australia's Disability Strategy Data Improvement Plan</p> <p>The DIP sets out how Australian governments will ensure data needed to measure outcomes for people with disability is collected, shared, and improved over the life of ADS.</p>
Disability Gateway	<p>Disability Gateway</p> <p>The Disability Gateway includes a website, a dedicated 1800-phone number and social media channels, to assist people with disability, their families and carers, to find and access trusted information and services.</p>

Term	Meaning
Disability Royal Commission	<p>Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People with Disability</p> <p>The Disability Royal Commission 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 Final Report was delivered to the Australian Government on 29 September 2023. In this report, the Disability Royal Commission recommended how to improve laws, policies, structures and practices to ensure a more inclusive and just society.</p>
DRMC	<p>Disability Reform Ministerial Council</p> <p>The DRMC is the forum for Australian Government and state and territory ministers with responsibility for disability policy in Australia. The DRMC discusses ways to improve and implement policy through ADS and NDIS. Major decisions on ADS are approved by DRMC.</p>
DROs	<p>National Disability Representative Organisations</p> <p>DROs provide systemic advocacy and representation for people with disability. They also provide advice to the Australian Government on breaking down barriers and improving participation of people with disability.</p>
Engagement Plan	<p>Australia's Disability Strategy Engagement Plan</p> <p>The Engagement Plan outlines the ways people with disability will be involved in the implementation of ADS over its life.</p>
Guiding Principles	<p>Australia's Disability Strategy Guiding Principles</p> <p>The Guiding Principles reflect the principles of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. Governments have agreed to use these Guiding Principles when developing policies, programs, services, and systems.</p>
Independent Evaluation	<p>Australia's Disability Strategy Independent Evaluation</p> <p>Evaluation is critical to knowing what is working well and what needs improvement. Under ADS, there are major evaluations planned for 2025 and 2029. Independent reviewers will undertake these evaluations.</p>
NDIS	<p>National Disability Insurance Scheme</p> <p>The NDIS is Australia's first national Scheme for people with disability. It supports people with a permanent and significant disability that affects their ability to take part in everyday activities.</p>
NDIS Review	<p>National Disability Insurance Scheme Review</p> <p>Since it began in October 2022, the NDIS Review looked into the design, operations and sustainability of the NDIS. It also looked at how to make sure the NDIS and the broader disability supports around it work well for the people with disability who depend on them. The Final Report of the NDIS Review was released on 7 December 2023.</p>

Term	Meaning
Outcomes Framework	<p>Outcomes Framework</p> <p>The Outcomes Framework measures, tracks, and reports on outcomes for people with disability. This includes measuring the contribution key systems such as healthcare, housing, education, and employment are making to achieve outcomes.</p>
TAPs	<p>Australia's Disability Strategy Targeted Action Plans</p> <p>TAPs apply an intensive focus over one to three years to achieve specific deliverables which improve outcomes for people with disability.</p>
UN CRPD	<p>United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities</p> <p>The UN CRPD is an international human rights convention which sets out the fundamental human rights of people with disability. Its purpose is to promote, protect and ensure the full and equal enjoyment of all human rights and fundamental freedoms by all persons with disabilities, and to promote respect for their inherent dignity.</p>

