Hello and welcome to this webinar on Foundational Supports.

My name is Mel Butcher and I'm the Director of Impact and Engagement at The Social Deck, and we've been working with the Commonwealth and the State and Territory governments to help to coordinate and deliver Foundational Supports consultations over the last couple of months.

Before we begin today's webinar, I'd like to acknowledge the traditional custodians of the lands that we're meeting on today. I know that people are joining from all across the country. I'm really privileged to be coming to you from the beautiful lands of the Gubbi Gubbi peoples in Queensland.

I want to give thanks for being on their traditional lands and acknowledge the connection and the care that First Nations people have had with the lands, with water, and life on this country for many, many thousands of years.

I pay my respects to elders past and present and extend this respect to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people joining us for this webinar.

I also want to acknowledge the lived and living experience of people with disability at this time, including many people who are self-advocating for their rights, people working in systemic and individual advocacy supporting others as well as families and carers. I want to recognise the huge contribution people with disability, families, and carers have made to this consultation process already.

And this is especially acknowledging that it is an uncertain time for many people with disability, for families, carers, and supporters, with many reforms and changes that are happening now or being talked about in the future. So given this, I really want to thank you wholeheartedly for your time joining this webinar and participating in this event between so many other things that are happening, other important work and consultations as well.

So we're really excited to have more than a thousand registrations for today's webinar.

I'm going to be joined by some expert panellists to talk through some of the key themes that we've been hearing across Foundational Supports consultations across the country. So we've been having workshops, roundtables, yarning circles, and meetings, and we've been doing various online events as well. I'll also talk a bit more about how we've been engaging with people shortly.

Some of the background information that we'll cover today is available on the DSS Engage website. We'll pop that into the chat now, and that information includes two consultation papers on General Foundational Supports and Targeted Foundational Supports for children and their families, carers, and kin.

We do want to acknowledge that especially with the concerns and uncertainty that I mentioned earlier, it's important that you care for yourself too. If you do need to reach out to someone, you can contact Lifeline on 13 11 14. And we'll put some other support lines that are more specific into the chat.

Now, I do want to take a breath after that and hand over to my colleague, Samantha Jenkinson, who will be speaking to quite a few of the themes we've heard in consultations today to introduce herself. So over to you, Samantha.

Hi, everybody. My name is Samantha Jenkinson. I participated and helped facilitate a couple of the workshops that were held in Western Australia in Perth and Bunbury, and I've been a disability advocate and I'm a person with a disability myself for many, many years so I'll be helping today with what we heard around building the capacity of people with disabilities and how we can build the capacity of communities as well as how we keep things safe. So I'll talk to you later on in the session.

Thanks so much, Samantha. We will also be joined a little bit later by Stacey Touma from the Child and Family Disability Alliance. So Stacey will be speaking a bit later in the webinar.

But now I would also like to introduce and hand over to Lisha Jackman, the branch manager at the Department of Social Services, to give an opening introduction. So thanks, Lisha.

Terrific. Thank you, Mel. And hi, everyone. So I'm Lisha Jackman from the Commonwealth Department of Social Services.

I'd also like to start by acknowledging the traditional custodians on the lands on which we're meeting today and their connections to land, water, culture, and community. I pay my respect to elders past and present and extend that respect to any Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people joining us today. I'm joining from Ngunnawal country.

So many of you would be aware that Foundational Supports are specific supports that are in addition to mainstream services and supports accessed through NDIS. They are guided by the recommendations from the independent review into the NDIS, which engaged with thousands of people and provided us some broad guidance around what they thought Foundational Supports should look like.

Foundational Supports are being jointly designed and funded by the Australian Government and State and Territory Governments.

Over the past several months, we've heard from the community, including many of you attending online today, around what these supports should look like. We didn't start with a blank page; your ideas have built on and helped us continue to shape what we heard through the independent review of the NDIS and what we also heard through the Disability Royal Commission.

In this first phase of consultation, we've been listening to your views on what are called general supports and many of you have told us your views on what's needed for things like information, advice and referral services, individual and family capacity building supports and community capability and capacity building supports.

We've also been listening to your views on what targeted supports for children under nine with developmental delay and disability in their families should look like.

So far, more than 3,000 people have participated in face-to-face and online events, with close to 2,000 people directly responding to the questionnaire or providing submissions or contributing to the online ideas wall.

To inform this work, you've provided us with insights about the types of supports that can make a real difference for people with disability and their families, carers, and advocates.

I'd really like to thank everyone who's taken the time to participate and to share your thoughts and experiences as they are invaluable.

For anyone that hasn't had a chance to participate, I'd really like to encourage you to jump online at engage.dss.gov.au. You've got until the 5th of December for this phase of consultation.

From here, The Social Deck will be compiling all of the information that we've heard into a final report that governments will then use to help us continue to work together on the design of Foundational Supports.

Foundational Supports are expected to start being rolled out in stages, with the first stage hoping to be starting to roll out later in 2025.

It's really important that you're aware though that consultation and conversation with the disability community will need to continue to help us shape these supports as we continue this work.

So thank you again for sharing your ideas, feedback, and personal stories. By contributing to these consultations, your experience and lived experience are helping us to design a new network of supports for people with disability.

We're incredibly grateful for all of the engagement to date and really keen to continue to hear from you as we continue this consultation and engagement, and I'll hand back to Mel, thanks.

Thanks so much, Lisha. Yes, Mel speaking, and yeah, thanks for that introduction. I wanted to just now talk about some of the consultation process in terms of who we've consulted with, how we've been consulting in the community. So thanks, Lisha, for outlining some of that participation that we have had so far in the process.

To give you a bit more of a sense of who has contributed to what we've heard so far, I wanted to share some more statistics on participation. People with disability or mental health concerns and families and carers have made up around about two-thirds or more than 65% of who we've heard from during these consultations so far.

Other stakeholders contributing have included disability advocates, disability and health providers or other organisations including peak bodies. And there's also been a real balance, almost an equal number of people with disability who are on the NDIS and those who are not on the NDIS contributing.

All states and territories have been represented and we have visited each state and territory face to face and we've been doing online events as well. We're really pleased to see that about a third of feedback has come from regional and rural areas of Australia as well. This is really important we know given the needs are different and Foundational Supports might look differently in those areas.

So I just want to reiterate Lisha's comments. We've been really thankful to the disability community organisations and others who have contributed.

There's been so much consultation underway about changes in the NDIS and other areas of disability, plus health and aged care and other reforms. So we really appreciate the genuine work that has gone into both contributing what's needed in Foundational Supports, but also helping the community to have their say and to understand what Foundational Supports might look like in the future.

So some of the ways that we've been able to have people contribute. More than 750 people have met with us face to face in about 20 different locations across Australia.

That's included community discussions and roundtables with people with disability, as

well as more open workshops for anyone to come along. We've worked with six different facilitators, obviously Samantha being one, with disability to lead the discussions across states and territories and partnered with disability-led organisations as well, as well as having advice from an advisory group to make sure that events are led and informed by people with disability.

The engagement has also included specific family and carer sessions, and we've run them in partnership with the Child and Family Disability Alliance, which Stacey is here from today, and you'll hear from her a little bit later. We've had some really specific activity so that we can make sure that we can hear from certain groups who might not be able to come to open consultations.

For example, our First Nations Engagement Manager was in Meriburra just last week. That's a regional town in Queensland and facilitating yarning circles with First Nations peoples and families. And we've been really lucky again to have the support of National Disability representative organisations to both hold and listen into specific sessions with people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, with young people and people with intellectual disability and their families.

Our engagement team were really fortunate to attend some recent self-advocacy conferences such as the Loud and Clear Conference in Queensland and Speak Out Advocacy Conference in Melbourne to chat with self-advocacy groups supported by... Oh, sorry. And we also attended in Victoria, sorry, to the Ross House in Melbourne to chat with self-advocacy groups supported by the Self-Advocacy Resource Unit. And of course, Speak Out Advocacy Conference was in Launceston, Tasmania.

We have also worked with partners in delivering consultations with autistic people through existing events and in online sessions, and also with First Nations people in areas like the Kimberley in Western Australia. And we've held lots of online meetings and discussions to hear from people with specific needs.

That includes from rural and remote areas, with people with complex communication needs, with chronic health conditions and including people with disability who aren't able to or would prefer not to leave their homes. These kinds of activities make sure that what we hear and learn about Foundational Supports comes from different perspectives.

The ability for people to contribute in their own time has been really important. And it's a good time for me to give a bit of a plug for those consultation opportunities that are still open. These options are available for you to contribute any further thoughts until midnight next Thursday, 5th of December. I'll mention them again at the end of this webinar, but there is a questionnaire, ideas wall, and a submission process.

So we encourage you after the session to take a look at that. There’s actually the ideas wall is a really open way to visually see other ideas that people have put up, and we'll put a link to that in the chat now as well if you do want to open that up or come back to it after the session.

So today, to get into some of the feedback, we want to be able to talk about two types of Foundational Supports that we've been consulting on. There are General Supports, which include information and guidance, peer support, and capacity building. These are supports for all people with disability who may or may not be accessing the NDIS, and they're designed to help people participate more fully in the community.

As many people will know, the NDIS review also recommended Targeted Supports, and they are focused on helping certain groups of people that aren't accessing support through the NDIS and might need more support than what's available through mainstream services. So today we'll be talking about Targeted Supports in the context of children with developmental delay, difference, concern, or disability and their families and carers.

And just to be clear, the current consultation and this webinar cover these two types of Foundational Supports that are the focus for the early stages of design and delivery by governments. That's General Supports and Targeted Supports for children and family, carers, and kin.

So finally, it's time to speak to what we have been hearing. And firstly, I'd really like to mention some of the overarching themes that underpin what we have been hearing. These are really relevant to a lot of the topics and the types of supports that we'll be talking about today. So we're going to pop a slide up that will describe some of these key overarching themes.

The first theme is around trust and independence. A really key thread through all of the consultations was the need for trusted relationships with individuals and organisations that are independent. For example, we've heard of the need to involve trusted and values-based organisations, such as not-for-profits, that are independent from service provision so there aren't conflicts of interest.

There's also a need for models of delivery where relationships can actually be built over time.

We've heard about key worker or case worker models, but things where relationships can be a bit more consistent.

And they prevent people from having to tell their stories or experiences over and over again at many different entry points or services.

People have also told us within this that continuity and consistency of supports is really important to build those trust and relationships over time with organisations and with local communities. A key way to do this is to also involve community leaders or community champions to ensure that there is awareness and buy-in, and that's especially important for First Nations, CALD communities, and other specific groups and demographics.

The second overarching theme is around no wrong door. It's a phrase that we've heard

over and over again. It goes to things like soft entry points so that people are welcomed and supported to connect wherever and however they turn up. It might mean a wider distribution of knowledge and resources to key touch points such as hospitals, child and family nurses, GPs, schools, early childhood libraries, and physical notice boards, as well as more intentionally designed and specific places in the community. But really, it is supporting people wherever and however they turn up.

The next theme is around local and connected. We've heard it's so important to have local knowledge that can really facilitate good connections to local supports for people. Part of this is supporting grassroots organisations that are already really connected into the community. We've heard of the importance of having supported referrals.

That's around having warm referrals and handovers with support given to take the next steps. That might also include things like follow-ups as appropriate by trusted individuals and organisations.

Importantly, we've heard of the importance of accessible information. That includes making sure formats like Easy Read and Easy English, Auslan, in-language resources where appropriate, and materials that are accessible for screen readers are available. There should be a delivery of information in a variety of ways, including digital, online, paper, phone, and in person.

We have heard that quality, disability-aware information and resources is really important. That means being accurate, clear, and consistent, but also disability-aware, neuro-affirming, and rights-based. We need to make sure that information is unbiased by commercial interests and developed using culturally appropriate and safe language as well.

We know that information can't be a one size fits all.

We also heard that holistic person-centred and family-centred approaches are critical. Moving away from one-size-fits-all approaches, we want tailored, holistic, and flexible approaches that take into account a whole person, their goals and plans, and their rights to decision-making and independence in the community. That's what people have told us.

Whole-of-family approaches account for the family environment and the needs of the whole family, including siblings and extended family.

I think we can really learn from First Nations approaches to this. That's what we've been hearing in some of our First Nations engagements: looking at families in a really holistic way. We've heard that for mob with disability, cultural approaches can come first before disability.

Another really important overarching theme is around peer support and lived experience expertise. People have mentioned peer support so much and the importance of having people with lived experience providing advice and support.

They are more trusted.

We know that people with lived experience and families and carers are experts in their own lives and have expertise to share with people experiencing similar barriers.

Peer connections provide emotional support and reduce social isolation. Peer advocacy groups can work together to build the capacity of themselves and reduce discrimination for others as well.

And lastly, we've heard of the importance of longer-term funding cycles especially able to sustain good work that's being done across the delivery of many types of supports and across regions throughout Australia.

People told us that it was really critical to sustain these supports so they can be over the life journey of a person, that it's needed to, as relationships and trusts take that time to build, and that supports retaining, that being able to retain staff for consistency and continuity is really important.

So that longer-term funding or that certainty is really important for that. And that's particularly important for organisations employing people with disability.

A few other things we've heard: lots of different organisations that have been involved, and we want to sort of build from the good things that are happening. There's a wide range of organisations, but a few things that people said were really important in looking at who's involved in delivering, and that's that organisations are free from conflicts of interest as we've talked about, to be local and connected to communities, to be trusted by community members, and to have representation of lived experience, including diverse and intersectional lived experience.

So those are the overarching things, and they really do cover a lot of both General Supports and those Targeted Supports that we've been consulting on. So I want to now get to being a bit more specific about those types of supports and what we have been hearing. I'll do the first sort of section and then I'll be handing over to Samantha after that.

Some of the common things that we've been hearing about the first part of general support, which was information, advice, and referral services. The ideas that were coming up were really, there was some consistency and, you know, there were some really different ideas as well. But some of the really key things were firstly around local place-based settings and wraparound services. So we heard all around Australia and in metro and in regional areas and rural areas as well, the importance of hubs.

So local hubs, there could be neighbourhood centres, migrant hubs, all sorts of different hubs as suggested as a key mode of delivery of information, advice and referral services.

And we heard that information and services provided at hubs should be locally relevant, spaces need to be accessible and welcoming for all people in the community. And also that there might be different models. So in regional or remote areas, some of those sort of hub and spoke models where outreach is included from the hub might be more appropriate. Hubs need to also include information and advice or referral services, but also aim to bring together different types of supports that can wrap around people, that can help people to take the next steps. So it might be supporting referrals, it could be things like admin support for identification, applications, assessment and that sort of thing where appropriate.

A lot of people in consultations noted that the hubs could actually help to bring services and sectors together to sort of break down or minimise siloing. So, for example, having a presence of both disability and health services at hubs might be important.

The second thing there is around digital solutions. Now, it's really important. So, people did bring up digital solutions, play space and local were obviously very important, but we also heard that digital solutions can provide accurate, locally relevant or cohort-specific information.

So they were acknowledged as important, although many participants did caution that they should be used where digital or online is preferred or appropriate to suit the needs of people with disability and to be tailored to those needs. For example, where it might be useful to have a centralised directory of supports that are relevant to a type of disability or a certain cohort in a person's local area. One person mentioned it could be like a sort of wiki camp for local services, but that could be available throughout Australia. Some of those solutions could support and connect with in-person and phone-based services as part of a continuum of channels and modes of information delivery. And people suggested that technology could actually support really tailored solutions for people. So through the use of AI, for example, or similar sorts of things that can provide accurate information and a bit of a pathway for people through to what they need.

It was important to note that many participants did caution against the use of a digital-first approach. And the reasons for this were that people said there were digital divides for people with limited access to hardware, data availability or affordability, and that some people in regional, rural and remote areas had limited access to the internet. Sometimes there could be issues with a lack of culturally appropriate or a safe online environment, and there might be then the need in an online solution for people to become aware rather than meeting them where they're at.

Another insight is that feedback through the consultations did indicate a pretty low awareness and use of the Disability Gateway platform that's currently available.

The next thing there is around peer groups providing information and advice, and that was really commonly cited as something that's working well for a lot of people. We heard about the importance of peer groups, and I think you'll hear it through a lot of what we're talking about today, particularly about providing that trusted information and advice from people who understand through lived experience. I think it was brought up in almost every group consultation.

It was suggested that Foundational Supports could provide more funding for peer groups or have things like paid roles for facilitators or organisers with lived experience, and that there’s a need for peer groups to be supported with up-to-date and accurate information so that they can distribute that sort of thing, noting that there could be a risk of misinformation with some groups.

We heard that there could be support for both online and in-person peer groups as either format can be most appropriate, just depending on the preferences of people. We also heard the need for support for early recognition of developmental delay and early advice for parents. A really common theme across consultation was that need for early recognition and also support.

There was a high level of people saying that there was a need for more information and advice for parents at key touch points. So that might be sort of maternal and child health, hospitals, GPs, and also at places like playgroups and schools and other early childhood settings. It's really important that that information was accurate and relevant to the needs of parents with the opportunity for some of those maybe warm referrals and support to take the next step.

Lastly, in terms of information, advice and referrals, we heard that collaboration and referral networks could be really important. So we know that a number of consortia and alliances have emerged to better facilitate connection and referrals, especially to more specialised areas of information and for different sort of disability cohorts.

One idea that was brought up a lot is that the delivery of Foundational Support should encourage more organisations to collaborate, both at the local level and at the state level, and to develop those really trusted referral pathways. Also, that sort of collective accountability for providing quality supports with the ability to share information safely and to reduce people with disability and families having to repeat their stories. And just as a last on that, one thing we heard in regional and more remote areas is that people can be more connected and organisations can be more connected. There may be less silos, but this can present challenges in working within rigid systems. So that needs to be looked at differently. And also that an issue can be a lack of services to direct people to.

So I'm going to stop there as that was a lot of information from me.

But I'd really love to hand now over to Samantha Jenkinson to talk about the next part of general Foundational Supports, which is about capacity building for individuals and communities. So thanks, Sam.

Thanks very much, Mel. Samantha Jenkinson speaking now. I'm coming from the lands of the Whadjuk Noongar people in Perth in Western Australia. So I'm going to be talking through what we heard about capacity building for individuals. So what that means is, what are the things that need to be in place to support and empower people with disability to build their confidence and their skills?

I want to start just before we go into the direct themes, just to acknowledge that through the workshops, people did talk about how many of the themes and the ways of doing capacity building are things which have been talked about for a long time and that we do already know about and have been used in the disability sector in many ways.

What's, I guess, different here is that the new systems with NDIS Foundational Supports and how that's going to work together with states and territories and the federal government working together to deliver these is really important to hear.

Again, how those can be implemented, what it looks like in practice and new ideas when we've got new technology and other things happening as well, and for newer people that are coming in to the disability space.

So I'm going to start with just some of the themes, one of the biggest themes that came across, which is about person-centred approaches. So this is really about the need for capacity building that's tailored to people, to be as flexible as possible, and to work with people as their situations change.

And we also heard about the need to integrate whole of life planning and goal setting. So especially for those key transition points for people, such as leaving school, moving from school to work, moving out of home and wanting to get some examples of how that could work for people.

And so this connects back to, and you'll hear this, that all these different three areas are actually quite connected.

So, for example, someone provided an idea about getting notifications so that people can find the right information at the right time when they're going through those key transition points, for example.

We also heard about approaches and models that centre the person with disability with support around them to empower them and to support decision making, such as circles of support and micro boards, which we know are out there and working already.

Community development approaches were also mentioned by several people as a really great framework to make sure that people with disabilities and communities are at the centre of capacity building and that there is capacity building which is holistic.

So looking at a person's whole environment and community.

And what that could look like is connecting people to networks that are local for them, but that build on a person's strengths and abilities and recognise that.

Rights and self-advocacy was also a really major theme that came up as well in this area, which was also where we heard a lot about peer support and peer groups as well.

And I did note that someone had asked in the chat about what is peer support and how is that different to, for example, psychosocial disability support.

And peer support, for those that might not be familiar, is really where people who have the lived experience and the expertise of being through the issues and understanding the issues from a lived experience perspective are coming together and supporting other people who are going through the same types of things or who are looking for the same types of information.

And I know that in the psychosocial disability space and in mental health sector, lived experience peer support workers have been around for a long time.

And they've been there in different ways in the disability sector, particularly around self-advocacy groups.

And so that came across as being needed across all areas.

But in the case of self-advocacy specifically, which is about people learning about and gaining the confidence and support from others to speak up for themselves and to speak up on behalf of their group, that came across as really strongly something which people thought was important for capacity building.

So that was also about creating a long-term connection to a community that people felt protected and supported in.

And self-advocacy groups can really talk about the issues and rights from those directly affected by oppression or barriers and how different people have addressed that and how people have found their way to be included, as well as then advocating for inclusive mainstream and community services.

So self-advocacy groups, we heard, can provide peer support as well as capacity building, leadership opportunities, and might also directly employ people with disability.

And for people with disabilities, particularly with cognitive disabilities or disabilities that might affect the way you think, such as intellectual disabilities, self-advocacy groups were seen as being really important to build confidence.

And to also work as a group to advocate for people within that community.

And we also heard that self-advocacy groups can provide a really strong purpose for people to stay connected and be involved in their community as well.

Some examples that we heard about are, for example, a deafblind cafe where people come together, they get speakers, they talk about issues that maybe everyone might be experiencing, such as access to public transport, access to emergency services and being able to share that information, as well as bring those issues to the broader deafblind community, for example.

We also heard that it was really important that there was sustained support for self-advocacy to keep self-advocacy groups going.

And that included sustained funding and also awareness that the groups were available.

And we also heard that there needed to be more representation of intersectional identities, intersectional identities as well in those self-advocacy groups and opportunities.

We also heard there was a need for a larger voice for people with intellectual disabilities, acquired brain injuries and complex communication needs as those are groups that are often spoken for rather than supported to self-advocate.

And there's a number of self-advocacy groups in a number of states who have had active members supporting each other for many years which were provided as examples such as Reinforce in Victoria.

The rights awareness and decision making was also seen as being a really important part of individual capacity building and people's understanding and learning about rights-based information, learning about what their rights are, learning about what supported decision making is and getting resources that can support both people with disabilities and the families and supporters and kin that support them.

And a good example might be some of the resources that are available, for example, online from different organisations over time.

We also heard about the importance of disability advocacy organisations, particularly as a vital role in helping people understand their rights in different service sectors.

We heard very strongly that people with disability are the experts.

So this comes back to those peer support models and how important they are to provide the opportunity for people to be experts in their own lives and to help other people become experts as well.

And people with disability have complex needs and often face unique barriers.

And so that lived experience perspective is really important for that.

We also heard that it's important that people are in paid roles when they're coordinating and facilitating peer support groups.

And examples were provided around amputee peer support, spinal cord injury, where paid workers get training, support groups and support people that are new to the disability journey, as well as supporting established groups as well.

We've heard that when people are working in these roles, if there's not valued, then there's a really high chance of burnout, so it was really important that people are valued and supported when they're employed in those roles and are supported to develop their skills as well.

We also heard a really strong feedback about support for youth transitions and those pathways to employment.

So participants having that need to be able to get support around navigating key life transitions.

Again, that came up earlier, the moving out of home, shifting from school to employment, shifting from employment into careers as well in the disability sector, and that flexibility to get different types of support and connect with different groups or connect with different ways of building skills at those different transition points in life.

We heard about the importance of holistic goal setting and life planning to build people's confidence and capability and to be able to look forward and also to build self-advocacy for children and young people to then be able to have the confidence in later life to self-advocate.

We also heard that it was really important that information for parents was future-focused so that they would know what were the next steps and can be supported to build the independence and to build the capacity of their children.

And so there were some examples provided there about things like adult people with disabilities sharing and connecting with families and children with disability in safe environments so that there was both families and children and young people with disabilities being able to see what possible futures were there for them.

We also heard about capacity building supports to connect young people to their communities so that they're learning skills in the community and not just through parents and carers.

And that included things like mentorships, helping people to find employment pathways, building life skills, whatever that might look like for that person and where they're at in life, and encouraging entrepreneurship.

So that is things like small business and people starting up their own businesses, as well as the capacity to use the digital services that are out there.

So that's a snapshot of what we've heard around capacity building for individuals.

I'm going to move on now to the next bit of feedback that we've got which is around what we heard for people with disabilities who are, what is needed to build the capability, sorry, what is needed to build the capability of community organisations to be more inclusive?

My apologies, I've just got to get to the right page in my notes.

So the first part that I talked about was capacity building for individuals. So that was about what can be done to better support people to have the confidence and feel empowered to have the skills to live the best life possible and this next section then is how do we build the capacity, how do we make sure that community is inclusive and accessible and what needs to be done in that space because both of those are the key sort of sides of what's going to make society better for people with disabilities.

So what we heard in this session, in the sessions that we consulted on for this particular area, was very strongly about a need for more education and training for community organisations. So there was that recognition that there needs to be more work done with community organisations to build their awareness and their capability to be more inclusive and accessible for people with disabilities.

And people talked about community organisations and mainstream services, that how important that was, that they're accessible and inclusive.

People said that that could look like things like workshops or consultants that work with different groups in the community, like sporting groups, providing education and resources.

And many people said that community organisations are often volunteer run.

So they're time poor, they have small budgets, and so there needs to be incentives or free educational support to make sure that organisations will take up those opportunities.

And a common idea around supporting organisations was to develop communities of practice so that they can share learning and resources.

And people also talked about how that can connect with things like where local government is.

And so some examples were where local government already does capacity building for sporting clubs, for example, through the local government and that you could build in communities of practice around accessibility and inclusiveness into those things that are already in place.

We also heard that having recognition of community organisations and non-government services that are already inclusive and accessible would help to raise awareness and provide incentives.

So we heard about things like having a disability tick similar to the rainbow tick, having a quality framework for safe, inclusive and affirming services and employers similar to those that are there for the rainbow tick as well.

We have already talked about how it's really important to have key touch points that help people with disabilities and their families find information.

And that was seen as being really important as well for community organisations. So where do community organisations, you know, what are the key touch points that they can find education and capacity building for them to be able to get the resources to become more inclusive and accessible as well?

In particular, we heard a lot about all the different ways people with disability connect and find information as well, which Mel talked a little bit about, but you can see how these things are very connected. So, you know, in particular, we talked about GPs, maternal and child health schools, maternal and child health centres, schools, educators and how these can be some of the connecting points and that they need to be then inclusive and accessible and educated so that they can provide points for other community and local organisations as well as people with disabilities.

And we also, again, heard really strongly the need for people with lived experience to lead that capacity building in the community.

So people with disability running the sessions, running the workshops, sharing their expertise, sharing their lived experience to be able to support organisations to become more inclusive and accessible.

And that acknowledgement that people with disability are experts about the barriers that exist in community and the ways to overcome those.

So sharing those experiences is a really powerful way of communicating the importance of accessibility in the community.

People also talked about specific disability types and barriers and specific intersectionalities that should be supported to lead education and training to assist specific needs of different diverse groups.

So this particularly came up around, for example, people representing First Nations people, people from multicultural communities, LGBTQI+SB, so groups with disability specific needs, but also people with intellectual disabilities, people with sensory disabilities, the deafblind community, people with complex needs and communication.

And advocacy and self-advocacy groups led by people with disability and family members were seen as being really well placed to provide that expertise, to provide and develop the resources and the delivery of the education and capacity building in communities.

And that those education and that capacity building would be, you know, that it's important that those are done in public places, so such as libraries.

And one example that was provided was an Indigenous self-advocacy group that is working using creative outlets like videos and artwork in their community to change attitudes.

And another example we heard from was the formation of community disability advocacy boards or community disability networks that have people with lived experience in paid roles in local communities working with local government and targeting community organisations to build their capacity.

Which comes to that last point there, we heard really strongly about how local governments are a key player in supporting local organisations to be inclusive and accessible.

So several people talked about the key role that councils have or had that are really useful to supporting community organisations, whether that's part of a local government's access and inclusion plans or doing separate capacity building projects.

Those are often the places which have those connections to the local groups and the local clubs.

And it was also important because local government often has a broader range of community organisations and opportunities that can really be that conduit to partner on capacity building and increasing the inclusiveness and accessibility of the local community.

So those were the key themes we heard around building the capacity of community and as you would have heard there's a really strong connection between the three different areas.

Back to Mel.

Thanks Samantha, Mel speaking.

So I'd like to actually just go to introduce Stacey Touma, who's the CEO of Kindred and part of the Child and Family Disability Alliance as well. And maybe Stacey, you could give a quick introduction for yourself as well and then talk about some of the things that are really relevant to children and families. Thanks, Stacey.

Absolutely. Thanks, Mel.

And thank you, Sam. As a parent of a child with disability who is actually entering his teen years, it was just really wonderful to hear the things that, you know, what people within the community and people with disability and being sharing is helpful.

And as a parent kind of entering this new stage, it's just really valuable to hear about all the things that are going to be able to empower him to self-advocate and to support him in decision-making. So thank you for that.

So as Mel said, I am Stacey Touma and I'm the CEO of Kindred.

So we are a family-led organisation that provides peer support, capacity building, information and resources to parents and carers of children with disability.

And I am here today representing the Child and Family Disability Alliance which is a national partnership between three family-led organisations, Kindred, Kind and ACD Victoria and collectively we engage with over 30,000 families across all parts of Australia.

I would like to just before I move on acknowledge the traditional owners of the various lands that we are joining from today and pay respect to elders past and present as well as First Nations people that are joining today and also acknowledging that I'm joining from the lands of the Gadigal people of the Eora nation.

So the Child and Family Disability Alliance has been working with The Social Deck over the past six or eight weeks, I'm not sure there's so much happening at the moment it's all going so quickly, but our role has been to support them in their in-person and online consultations for families across Australia.

So personally I've been able to attend many of those and be able to hear directly from families which has been really valuable. I did also want to acknowledge the fantastic work of The Social Deck in leading these consultations on behalf of the Australian government.

So I have heard from many of the families that have participated how safe and welcomed they felt in sharing their experiences, challenges and ideas. So thank you.

I'm going to share with you a summary of what families have shared, starting with capacity building for families and carers, which I can see there's already been quite a lot of discussion about in the chat.

But before I do jump in, I just wanted to provide a quick overview and a bit of a refresher.

So capacity building supports for families are intended to help connect children and families to support in the community that can help them to build their knowledge, skills and awareness to support children and family members with disability. So this could look like peer support groups or social emotional support for parents and carers, families and carers having the tools and information they need to support their children, such as helping them to navigate services or setting, being able to support them with setting up routines, and also things like access to evidence-based short courses and practical parent support workshops or programs on specific topics such as child development, supporting emotional regulation, or how to prepare for important transition points in a child's life.

So what did we hear from families? One of the strongest things that came through was the need for a whole family-centred approach to capacity building and support for families that have children with disability, and that this approach would consider the wellbeing and support needs of all family members, and that this was important to many parents, siblings, as well as carers who have a disability themselves. Many people shared that while individualised funding through the NDIS has been important and in many cases life-changing, that there is a real need for broader support for family members to be able to build their knowledge, skills and capacity to best support their family member with disability and that this includes support for siblings and extended family members.

We heard of the need to walk alongside families rather than just pointing them to specific services with a more holistic view of need and opportunity to thrive for the whole family and that to do this effectively organizations must be independent from service delivery to prevent conflicts of interest and that there is a need for more collaboration across sector and organizations to be able to provide that wraparound support. We heard that being able to provide capacity building approaches with families both in the home and in natural settings where children, including siblings, live, learn and play, and that this may prevent family members being left out of having their needs met, and therefore being able to provide the best support themselves.

Families also shared how valuable it was when people across those early touch points, such as GPs, maternal health nurses, early childhood educators and play groups, knew where to direct them for information and support.

So rights-based awareness and education for families and carers. We heard that there is a need for more tailored education and resources for families and carers on disability rights and how they can best advocate for their family members with disability in mainstream and community settings and that this should be developed in family-friendly formats and also in language.

Many families told us that it was highly important that they were given rights-based disability-aware and neuroaffirming education, training and support in those early years or soon after a diagnosis of disability or assessment of developmental delay and that this helped them not only to advocate for their own children but also to provide better information and support to other parents. Families often cited workshops with other parents in supportive environments and online courses that build their skills and confidence as highly important and effective so programs such as one-off self-advocacy workshops and courses that build their skills to help them to navigate systems and support their child.

As a result of this increased awareness and education, many parents and family members who are a little further along in their journey share that they are now working in or with organizations that support other families so that they can share their experiences to help other families. Families also share that it's important that they are recognised as experts in their children's and their own lives, especially within schools and healthcare settings.

Peer support groups. So I think it was Mel that said earlier that there were some kind of, you know, consistent things that came up and peer support was one of those areas. We've been hearing across all consultations the importance of peer support for families and it just can't be overstated. We consistently heard how peer groups provided a trusted place for parents to be able to share their experiences, learn from each other and become connected in a safe and supported environment and that these peer groups can be both online or face-to-face or both depending on the preferences of families and their location and circumstances. We also heard that peer support can be especially crucial for families living in rural and remote areas where they may have limited access to services or where travel can add extra complexities.

There is a need for more supports for parent and carer peer support groups to connect and stay connected, recognising that many people who are facilitating or working in these organisations providing the peer support are also parents of children with disability or also have disability themselves and why they are absolutely best placed to do this work there is a real risk of burnout and that they need to be appropriately supported with ongoing funding and resourcing to ensure that the loads can be appropriately shared.

The final theme that I'm going to speak to is just that emotional support for families including foster parents and the broader the broader kind of, you know, support system around a family. Many people told us that more needs to be done to support families of children with disability emotionally and with self-care. We heard that play groups and parent support groups such as My Time reduce isolation, provide emotional support, create better connections with community and a really integral touch point across, you know, early in the journey but across those different transitions as well.

We also heard the importance of soft engagement in the early years of a child's life through inclusive groups that are welcoming for families and can also provide a support network for later years. Groups that provide support for specific disabilities or medical conditions or with an intersectional lens where appropriate were also highly valued by parents and carers.

So this type of support can be especially beneficial for parents who may be experiencing challenging behaviours and they are able to go along and connect with other parents and share experiences and learn practical strategies, but also feel that they're in a safe and supportive environment.

Across all of the consultations held across all states and territories of Australia, we did hear about the different complexities that family members faced, such as the impact on wellbeing for carers and especially for those who have a disability themselves when faced with the complexities of the system.

We also heard about the inequities that different families face, such as carers from multicultural or First Nation backgrounds and those living in rural and regional communities. It was clear that families see that there is no one-size-fits-all approach and that supports need to be tailored to meet the different needs, as well as how important it is for families to be supported so that they can be in a position to support their child and family to thrive.

I'm now going to jump over to some of what we heard around targeted Foundational Supports. I did also just want to mention that consultations are still underway, as has been shared by Mel and Samantha, and that these are just some early themes and that, you know, these may continue to be updated as further input is received.

So by way of background as to what Targeted Supports might be, we do know that there is a need for extra supports for children with developmental delay or concern or disability. Targeted Foundational Supports are intended for some children and their families who need more support that is available through mainstream services, and that this might look like lower intensity or periodic child and family centred allied health supports, or more intensive support for families to help them build their knowledge, skills and abilities in a child's natural environment, and maybe delivered jointly with allied health supports.

These supports need to extend to the whole family and to all of those who care for children and that they'll give families and carers the tools and information they need to support a child

to learn and play at home and in the community.

So what did families say?

A common theme was the need for early identification and support of developmental delay.

The earlier the better to be able to connect children and their families to supports

that can help them from falling through the cracks.

And the term falling through the cracks was actually something we heard quite often, and particularly

from families that were joining from regional, rural and remote communities, as well as multicultural and First Nations families.

We also heard about how useful it would be if these earlier assessments were available in settings such as hospitals, early childhood education and care, and school settings.

Families shared that clear information and pathways to assessment and diagnosis, if needed, are important so that they can have clear information and can set goals.

And we also heard quite a lot around the struggle that many families face on that journey to getting a diagnosis or exploring those concerns.

And when they have raised it, they can be told to wait and see and just the impact on the delay that this can cause. So family-centred holistic support. We heard that there is a need for family-centred services that wrap around and take a more holistic approach.

So an example that was shared was Circles of Practice.

People mentioned the need for more collaboration between providers of supports around a child and family and their vision or goals.

And we heard really great examples of this was when there were multidisciplinary teams that worked together and when there was that team around the child approach.

We also heard that families would like their focus to be extended from traditional allied health therapies. So things like OT and physio to include a broader range of supports may be helpful.

So this could be social workers, nutritionists, other kind of key supports.

We also heard how valuable therapy assistants and support workers were as part of that team around the child and family, and that these were really vital in being able to enable carers to be able to, you know, to be able to maintain their role in supporting their child to thrive.

Consistency and continuity.

So a strong theme was that need for consistency and continuity of supports and practitioners delivering supports for children and families.

Many people through the consults mentioned the importance of developing trusted relationships with practitioners and organisations who knew them, and that they could recommend other types of supports where needed, and where parents and carers did not have to tell the story over again.

Key worker, lead practitioner, and case management models were recognised as particularly helpful to support this.

And I think in every consultation I heard, I heard quite a lot about how valuable when families had good key workers were critical in being able to make some of these connections.

Many families were supportive of ideas that included group therapies. For example, being able to participate in programs like Hanen and that the supports are delivered in natural settings where children live, learn, and play instead of the individualized model that is currently delivered under the NDIS.

We heard that integration in natural settings and with groups that could assist them in making supports more affordable was helpful. And many families and carers said that they needed significant assistance financially to be able to continue to access evidence-based supports for their children. And that this was a theme that came up quite often when speaking about different communities experiencing, you know, financial challenges.

We also heard that families value when allied health professionals come to their home. And things like the benefits spoken about where they could come to my home, they could use our own toys and equipment, they can come to places that we frequent in everyday lives such as playgrounds and shopping centres, and just how useful it was when those supports helped their child to participate in community supports and activities.

We also heard that virtual solutions could enable assessments where the technology is able to assist and that families can access online digital solutions. And we did hear some really positive examples of telehealth virtual solutions working well, in particular for families in rural and remote communities with limited access to services and specialists.

Importantly, we heard about that there is a need to ensure evidence-based approaches and best practice in early intervention and then linking with the current work that is happening on the best practice framework.

So that is the summary of what we heard, as I mentioned at the beginning. So these consultations are still underway and these things could be updated.

But I believe that there's been some, I'm looking forward to reading through the chat, but I will hand back over to Mel now and open to questions or further discussion.

Great. Thank you so much, Stacey. That was, yeah, really insightful. And yeah, thanks for doing a great job in summarising so much that we heard from families and, yeah on those on those two kind of big things.

Can I just quickly jump in? Sorry, I just wanted to say actually how grateful to all of those family members, people with disability, you know carers that have a disability themselves and the community that participated. I think you know particularly this time of year when everyone is just so busy but just to be able to prioritize coming along and just sharing like some of their challenges and some of their experiences so like absolutely grateful and valuable for those insights and a privilege to be part of hearing that.

Yeah, absolutely. Thanks so much, Stacey. Me too. I really, yeah, I was at quite a few of those and yeah, really thankful those people that were coming forward. It was really, they were excellent sessions. I am going to hand back over to Samantha. We will have a little bit of time just at the end of the webinar to discuss some of the things that are coming through. But I do just want to hand over to Samantha because there's a really important topic around quality, safety and accountability of any new investments in these sorts of disability support. So I will go to Sam now. Thanks Mel.

And yes, it'd be good to have a little chat at the end, but this is a really important part of what we wanted to talk about and let people know about what we heard from the sessions on what we expect for the quality and the safety and the accountability of Foundational Supports.

And there was a really strong feedback and recognition that it was important that Foundational Supports are of high quality and that they are accountable and keep people safe or support the capacity building of safety as well.

One of the big themes that came across was lived experience involvement in feedback and accountability mechanisms.

So there should be more mechanisms, more ways that people with disabilities and their families can provide feedback directly to, whether it's community organisations, whether it's the groups running things or the bodies that might be funding them, but there needs to be more mechanisms where people can give feedback, that those mechanisms are available in a variety of formats, and that there's transparency in what's being heard and how things are being addressed to meet outcomes as well. And we also heard that lived experience organisations could be the organisations and the people that are involved in doing the check on whether things are being delivered in a way that are quality and are meeting outcomes for people with disabilities and families and could be the organisations that assist in making decisions on which types of Foundational Supports should be invested in in their local areas.

We also had some feedback around registration and certification and there was a range of different types of registration were proposed about different ways you could check quality or ensure quality but what people also really talked about strongly was that those things should be free or low cost they need to be flexible to adapt to the types of supports being provided and the level of risk and the size and what an organisation looks like that might be delivering those Foundational Supports. And we need to be taking account of the current certification processes that might already be in place, whether that's for health or for community organizations in different sectors because this is beyond health and disability as well.

And another common theme was consistency in then how to enforce or penalize you know how to like whether it's stopping people or fining or whatever it might look like that if people are doing the wrong thing, that it's consistent and that it's done appropriately. And we also talked about, or heard about, having a good quality framework that was built by people with disabilities and families, whether that's a tick for quality and safety or a star rating or review system. And again that comes back to then who does the checking of that? It's people with disabilities and families is what we heard strongly. And that there needs to be a good measurement of outcomes.

So we need to know a clear definition of Foundational Supports, what that should be achieving for people with disabilities and their families and carers, particularly for people who are not on the NDIS, and that the organisations who are delivering Foundational Supports should be accountable to those outcomes so it's not just about counting how many people might have received support but actually our outcomes being met. And we also heard there needs to be flexibility so that outcomes can be accounted for and measured in different ways over like the right time period for different people and to be able to show progress because we know that change in local communities for example when we're talking about community capacity building might have short-term gains but actually we're looking for longer-term change and how we're making sure we're measuring in longer term not just short term.

Some people also talked about direct commissioning or contracting models that might provide quality control through acquittal processes rather than a fee-for-service model or other sorts of models and that maybe there are different ways that that should be done depending on the communities that we're talking about as well.

And I'm going to hand over to Mel now to talk about what we heard for the workforce and what might Foundational Supports look like from that perspective.

Thank you, Sam.

I do, yeah, just want to talk a little bit about, and I've seen this coming through in the chat as well, some considerations for delivery, including those workforce considerations. And I would say this goes back to one of those overarching themes. The thing that we did hear, again, across almost all of the consultations was the need for more sustained longer term funding so that you can actually support people over their life journey and that there will be a need to actually have that to support workforce and to support consistency. For example, there are people, we talked about trust and relationships and the need to be able to maintain those. So, you know, through life transitions, people might want to be able to maintain those connections over those longer term. That might be through youth transition, skills for life, you know, and that sort of thing.

We did hear that in the current rollout of the ILC grant process, there had been issues because people felt that it could be quite patchy across states and regions and didn't account for necessarily the needs across regions. And that those shorter term grants can lead to issues, including things like organisational sustainability and workforce instability. And it also creates a need to allocate finite and already stretched resources to applying for more grant rounds, rather than delivering the sort of support that's needed on the ground.

We know that relationships, as we've talked about, are just really, really important and that the time and that sustained funding is needed for that, but especially in regional, rural and remote areas and for certain population groups and cohorts. People also mentioned that there is a need for evidence-based broad scale supports that need to be sort of funded or commissioned, at least for a minimum of five years, but that there needs to be sort of the flexibility to be able to adjust approaches as needed within that time period. So as Samantha was saying, that measurement of outcomes or understanding how things are working, whether they're working, and that flexibility to adjust.

And we did also hear that there is a role for shorter term funding or grants that might actually encourage a different sort of, so more innovative approaches or pilot projects or that sort of thing. A couple of other things that we heard on delivery was the need for local priorities and decision-making to be able to drive the delivery of supports, understanding that things are different across Australia, that there may be national priorities and that can be a good thing to have that consistency, but there needs to be that localised, tailored part of delivery.

We also heard that there's a real need to support disability-led organisations in procurement or funding and that there should be potentially more capacity-building support provided for disability and family or carer-led organisations, as well as First Nations, multicultural and other sort of community-led organisations to be procured through contracts and grant processes. People really gave us feedback that it was important to be able to build that capacity in organisations as well and to have that support.

And then this is especially important for the many disability-led organisations that are providing employment direct opportunities for people within their organisations. It's an important outcome in itself. I think one quote was that, you know, there needed to be funding for people, not just projects. We also heard of the need for self-determination and making sure that there's adequate funding, staffing and training for Aboriginal controlled organisations to be able to reach directly into communities in ways that are culturally safe.

And lastly, I'd just say two things. One, around workforce, we've talked about the need for consistency and understanding, obviously, that it can be a real issue in regional, rural and remote areas to attract and retain staff without job security or the ability to match incentives that might be provided by other sectors or industries. So other things that we heard other than funding was that investment in training, placement of the right people and professional development opportunities were really important.

And just lastly, I think on delivery, a really common theme that came up was the idea of breaking down silos and having systems talk to each other so that, you know, any Foundational Supports need to be integrated with other service systems, including disability, health, aged care, education. We heard that a lot coming up through the consultations so that people don't fall through those gaps.

We will need to wrap up fairly shortly, but I just wanted to go to Samantha and to Stacey to see if they had any final reflections on some of the things that have been coming through in the chat or that they sort of have heard through the consultations just before we wrap up.

So I'll go to Samantha first.

Thanks, Mel. Look, I think one of the things I think is really important that I think would be great to hear more from from people is if people have ideas around, pardon me, the where, who and how. So very much about that.

How do we have the consistency, the governance and decision making about how this might work as Foundational Supports as a system? A lot of people have talked about connection, things that have been in place previously, great ideas or things that might be already out there.

And how are we going to look at how those things are connected when we know it's both funding coming from states and territories and the federal government? So I did hear, you know, I have had a couple of people that talked to me about, you know, consistency across local boards in local government in areas that could be part of the decision making and oversight of Foundational Supports.

But so, you know, it's okay to think that big and to put ideas that are that big and to look at those sorts of issues about that decision making and how will this be governed where people with disabilities and families are involved, because that's what's always coming up really strongly.

So I just encourage that.

Thanks so much, Samantha.

And Stacey, did you have any final reflections?

Yeah, so I just wanted to add, so I think something that came up in some of my consultations was just around the need for tailored support to be able to meet communities need, particularly across different states and territories.

But actually some of the systems that are needed so that when families are crossing borders, it is a lot easier.

It is moving from one state to another is like moving to a country with some of the systems.

There are so many differences.

And I think just thinking about, you know, what Foundational Supports might look like in helping that kind of ease of, you know, when people with disability and families are moving around.

Something that came up quite a lot, particularly in the most recent groups, was just actually how critical supports are for people with disability who are caring for a child with disability and that that needs to be absolutely integral to this capacity building.

And just that transition point, so I think we've talked a lot about, you know, the supports that families need to be able to support their own well-being, plus the support they need to be able to support their child's development.

But that transition point from those early years and how we can be building the capacity of families to be able to support their child's independence, you know, their self-advocacy and what that kind intersection looks like between kind of the early years and, you know, children becoming, you know, independent and what that looks like.

Yeah, that's really great.

That's great.

Thank you so much, Stacey.

And thanks to both of you and everybody that has been involved.

But yeah, thanks so much for bringing both Samantha and Stacey for bringing those themes to life that we have been hearing.

It's been really appreciated.

It's been a real pleasure to work with you both, as well as all the others that we have partnered with as part of this.

I am just going to wrap up because I realise we've just gone a little bit over time.

I want to thank everybody for listening and for their contributions that are coming through the chat we really appreciate.

Importantly I want to remind you that consultation period doesn't end until Thursday the 5th of December at midnight. So that's for both General Foundational Supports and the Targeted Supports for children and families. And if you or anybody else you know might want to still engage, there are those other ways that are available on the DSS website. So things like the ideas wall and both types of questionnaires are on there, as well as you can make a submission.

In the meantime, in the next couple of weeks, the next few weeks, we'll be sort of going through and collating and analysing all of the detailed input that you have given us, thank you very much, and combining it into a really comprehensive report for government.

And then we'll also be producing a summary report that will be public in the new year as well.

We've put our contact details as well into the chat if there's anything else that you need to contact us about, about the consultation process. And lastly, just a reminder that this recording will be available online in around about one week after we've had it translated into Auslan as well.

And then we will be posting it onto the DSS Engage website. So thank you again so much for your input on a Friday. We really appreciate it. Have a great rest of the day and enjoy your weekend. Thank you.

Thank you.