

**Australia's
Disability
Strategy**
2021-2031

Creating
an inclusive
community
together

Implementation Report Summary

3 December 2021 – 30 June 2023



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Executive Summary

This document is a summary of *Australia's Disability Strategy 2021–2031 Implementation Report 3 December 2021 – 30 June 2023*. The full Implementation Report is available on [ADS Hub on Disability Gateway](#).

This is the first Implementation Report to be delivered under *Australia's Disability Strategy 2021–2031* (ADS). It provides a national overview of the work at all levels of government delivering improved outcomes for people with disability.

ADS sets out 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. During this first reporting period, we made progress across ADS Outcome Areas and implementation commitments. 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.

In this first reporting period we set up the structures that support the accountability and transparency of ADS, such as establishing ADS Advisory Council, and public reporting against ADS Outcomes Framework and Targeted Action Plans. This is in addition to the important work being undertaken by jurisdictions through their own disability plans and reporting mechanisms. Their reporting will add to the overall reporting against ADS.

We acknowledge and welcome the openness and passion with which people with disability and the disability sector have actively engaged in the implementation of ADS. ADS Engagement Plan sets out not only an intent for continued engagement with people with disability, but identifies key activities to meet this commitment. We are pleased to have met our commitments to hold annual public forums by delivering the first ADS National Forum in November 2022 and the first ADS State Forum in Queensland in June 2023. These provided important insights into areas we need to improve.

The Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People with Disability (Disability Royal Commission), established in April 2019, shaped the development of ADS. The recommendations in its [Final Report](#), provided to the Governor-General in September 2023, provides an important signpost for the way forward in improving the lives of people with disability in Australia. We have committed to review ADS in light of the Final Report and this work is now commencing.

The disability community has, understandably, high expectations of progress to be made in implementing ADS. We have made good progress in this initial reporting period, with a number of key commitments delivered. The next reporting period will see an even higher focus on working with people with disability to improve, and deliver on, tangible actions across all levels of government that will advance outcomes for all people with disability. This will include new Targeted Action Plans; ongoing consultation and engagement with people with disability; and improving evidence and data to improve transparency and support better decision making.

State and Territory Governments

ADS recognises that all levels of government are responsible for supporting people with disability to reach their full potential, as equal members of the community. State and territory governments play a significant part in implementing ADS. State and territory governments have their own disability plans or are developing plans. Actions are locally based and aim to work in parallel with activities under ADS. These plans are the primary mechanisms state and territory governments use to drive the delivery of their commitments under ADS.

The Implementation Report showcases key work being undertaken across Australia to improve outcomes for people with disability. The activities and initiatives are examples of only some of the important work underway. Further information on work being undertaken in each jurisdiction to support ADS can be accessed through the website links below:

- NSW Government [Communities and Justice](#)
- Victorian Government [State Disability Plan](#)
- Queensland Government [Disability Plan](#)
- Western Australian Government [Department of Communities](#)
- South Australian Government [Inclusive SA](#)
- Tasmanian Government [Department of Premier and Cabinet](#)
- ACT Government [Community Services](#)
- Northern Territory Government [Department of Territory Families, Housing and Communities](#).

Australia's 537 councils play a vital role in their communities. Councils are the closest level of government to their community and deliver around 150 services. Local governments develop strategic plans with their communities to guide future development and support their local communities. The Australian Local Government Association is pleased to see an increase in the numbers of Disability Inclusion and Access Plans being developed across Australia, and the impact this will have in considering the needs of people with disability as part of usual business for councils.

Australia's Disability Strategy Roadmap

ADS Roadmap gives an overview of the key work being done under ADS and shows when these activities will happen. During the reporting period, several Roadmap milestones were due for delivery. All milestones scheduled for 3 December 2021 to 30 June 2023 have been completed, or are in progress and on their way to delivery.

2021

- Complete:** First Targeted Action Plans released on 3 December 2021
- Complete:** 2021 Review of Disability (Access to Premises – Buildings) Standards released on 21 September 2021
- Complete:** The ADS Advisory Council was established in December 2021

2022

- Complete:** First ADS National Forum held on 2–3 November 2022
- In progress:** 2022 Survey of Disability, Ageing and Carers fieldwork completed, and results to be released in 2024
- In progress:** 2022 Review of the Disability Standards for Accessible Public Transport consultations completed, and report to be released in late 2023

2023

- Complete:** First ADS State Forum held in Queensland on 19 June 2023

ADS Outcome Areas

The 7 Outcome Areas in ADS collectively represent the areas people with disability told us are important to them and needed to be improved to achieve an inclusive Australian society.

The Outcome Areas set out priorities for governments at all levels to work with the community, business, and people with disability to deliver the needed changes. This includes providing employment opportunities, high-quality inclusive education, improving community attitudes, and making homes and communities safe, inclusive and accessible.

The following sections provide a sample of achievements and progress by the Australian Government and state and territory governments, from 3 December 2021 to 30 June 2023.

Outcome Area: Employment and Financial Security

Outcome: People with disability have economic security, enabling them to plan for the future and exercise choice and control over their lives

The unemployment rate for people with disability is more than double that of working-age people without disability. The employment rate for working-age people with disability has remained relatively unchanged for decades.

At [ADS National Forum](#) (November 2022), key themes among people with disability were the need to remove barriers at the employer level and improving the transition from education to employment for young people with disability. At the [Queensland ADS State Forum](#) (June 2023), participants echoed the same ideas around employment. Disability Representative Organisations have told us there is much more to do given the slow progress related to employment.

Examples of activities in this Outcome Area include:

- [Employ My Ability](#), the Disability Employment Strategy, launched in December 2021.
- The Australian Government [APS Disability Employment Strategy 2020–25](#).
- State and territory government employment strategies and plans, aimed at increasing public sector employment of people with disability.
- New programs and pilots for education, training and employment, such as Victoria's [Reconnect](#) program, South Australia's Training Priority Projects and Skilling South Australia initiatives, or Queensland's [Social Enterprise Jobs Fund](#).

Outcome Area: Inclusive Homes and Communities

Outcome: People with disability live in inclusive, accessible and well-designed homes and communities

ADS recognises the importance of housing, infrastructure and inclusive communities in supporting people with disability take part in their communities. In practical terms, this Outcome Area encourages actions that support the participation of people with disability in their communities through accessible housing, transport and communication systems and the built environment.

People with disability and ADS Advisory Council have raised concerns regarding housing for people with disability. The Advisory Council has advised the disability community is experiencing significant issues with housing, particularly with regard to affordability and accessibility.

Examples of activities in this Outcome Area include:

- Support for the 2022 VIRTUS Oceania Asia Games in Brisbane.
- Roll out of specialised accessible toilet and changing facilities through [Changing Places](#) Initiatives.
- Reviews of the [Transport](#) and [Premises](#) Disability Standards.
- Advancing the careers of artists or arts workers with disability through Creative Australia's [Arts and Disability Initiative](#).
- Supporting high-quality, safe and secure Specialist Disability Accommodation, such as through Victoria's building stimulus program.
- Initiatives that promote zero tolerance for discrimination, bullying and harassment, such as Equal Opportunity SA's [WE'RE EQUAL](#).



Outcome Area: Safety, Rights and Justice

Outcome: The rights of people with disability are promoted, upheld and protected, and people with disability feel safe and enjoy equality before the law

We are committed to preventing people with disability from experiencing harm through well-designed and integrated service systems, improved supports for those at risk of harm, and appropriate pathways for action if things go wrong. This Outcome Area is supported by the [Safety Targeted Action Plan](#) activities.

At [ADS National Forum](#) (November 2022), the session on Safety, Rights and Justice included a focus on the high rates of violence towards women with disability. Forum participants also voiced their concerns about the over-representation of people with disability in the criminal justice system. We are committed to enhancing access to equitable justice outcomes and more effective responses in the criminal justice system to people with disability.

Examples of activities in this Outcome Area include:

- Enhanced services to make electoral participation accessible.
- Supporting the establishment of the National Centre for Disability Advocacy and the Disability Advocacy Support Helpline.
- Legislative changes, such as Western Australia's reforms to end indefinite detention and improve procedural fairness for persons with mental impairment, or Tasmania's new Disability Inclusion legislation.
- Work to improve equity and inclusion for people with disability in the justice system, such as through ACT's [Disability Justice Strategy 2019–2029](#) and its First Action Plan.
- Projects that build the capacity of the disability sector to respond to domestic and family violence, such as NSW's Strengthening Domestic and Family Violence Supports for People with Disability project.
- Specialist disability supports and services in prisons, such as through Victoria's Prison Disability Support Initiative.



Outcome Area: Personal and Community Support

Outcome: People with disability have access to a range of supports to assist them to live independently and engage in their communities

The introduction of the NDIS provided a major and positive shift in the provision of individualised supports and funding for eligible people with disability. While the improvements provided by the NDIS cannot be understated for many participants, it has also become the major focal point of any discussion on personal and community support.

At [ADS National Forum](#) (November 2022), people with disability said there needs to be a focus on personal and community supports as a broader ecosystem of supports, and not just for NDIS participants. Disability Representative Organisations have told us there needs to be leadership and coordination between the 3 levels of government to ensure government investment in disability supports outside the NDIS.

Examples of activities in this Outcome Area include:

- Delivering the [NDIS](#).
- Commitments to supported decision making, such as through the ACT Government's amended [Guardianship and Management of Property Act 1991](#) (ACT).
- Investments in prevention and early intervention, such as NSW Government's investment in Brighter Beginnings initiative.
- Supports for people who are not eligible for NDIS or My Aged Care, such as South Australia's [Community Connections](#) program.



Outcome Area: Education and Learning

Outcome: People with disability achieve their full potential through education and learning

Education is a critical factor that impacts many areas in a person's life. It supports our employment and financial goals, friendships, health outcomes and recreational interests. Learning does not stop at the schoolyard gate: lifelong learning gives us even more opportunities for deeper engagement with our communities, personal fulfilment, and to adapt to the changing world around us. This Outcome Area is supported by the [Early Childhood Targeted Action Plan](#) activities.

At [ADS National Forum](#) (November 2022), participants discussed the need for teachers and schools to be better supported, such as through professional learning opportunities or building disability confidence across the sector. Disability Representative Organisations have stressed the importance of having accessible and inclusive education, including vocational training and tertiary education.

Examples of activities in this Outcome Area include:

- [Resources](#) to help students with disability and their families understand and exercise their rights.
- Student advocacy that is inclusive of students with disability, such as Northern Territory's Youth Voice Crew.
- Food literacy and nutrition education programs for people with disability, such as Western Australia's [Healthy Food for All Abilities](#) program.
- Commitments to inclusive education, such as Victoria's [Disability Inclusion](#) reforms and [Autism Education Strategy](#), and NSW's [Department of Education's Disability Strategy](#).



Outcome Area: Health and Wellbeing

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

Experiencing good health is a fundamental requirement for a good life. When people with disability experience barriers to good health, they also experience challenges to taking part in school, work and community life. At [ADS National Forum](#) (November 2022), people with disability discussed the negative attitudes towards people with disability that can limit access to healthcare, diagnosis and decision-making about their own treatment.

The disability community, including ADS Advisory Council, have also expressed concerns about COVID-19 supports for people with disability. People with disability often face numerous inequities to accessing health care and other necessary services, and the COVID-19 pandemic highlighted and, in many ways, deepened these inequities.

Examples of activities in this Outcome Area include:

- Improving healthcare through the [National Roadmap for Improving the Health of People with Intellectual Disability](#).
- Sectoral capacity building, such as the Investing in Our Mob: National Workforce and Training Program.
- State plans and strategies to support inclusive health and emergency planning responses, such as the ACT [Disability Health Strategy](#), the Northern Territory Emergency Plan, and Queensland's [Department of Health Disability Service Plan 2022–2024](#).
- Emergency preparedness projects, such as Tasmania's People with Disability Emergency Preparedness Project.



Outcome Area: Community Attitudes

Outcome: Community attitudes support equality, inclusion and participation in society for people with disability

Community attitudes towards people with disability continue to be one of the most fundamental barriers to a person's full inclusion and participation in Australian society. At [ADS National Forum](#) (November 2022), community attitudes was a recurring theme. Discussions included how stigma, ableism, negative attitudes and low expectations act as barriers in the lives of people with disability across multiple aspects of life.

Screen Australia's [Seeing Ourselves 2](#) (2023) report revealed that on-screen disability representation in Australian TV drama remains critically low. Forum participants identified increasing representation of people with disability in media and leadership as key to shifting community attitudes and encouraging inclusion.

Examples of activities in this Outcome Area include:

- Updates to [campaign guidelines](#) to support increased representation of people with disability in Australian Government advertising campaigns.
- Grant rounds and programs focussed on [building employer confidence](#) and supporting leadership skills of people with disability.
- Media campaigns to influence, educate and challenge disability stereotypes, such as Western Australia's [The Lives We Lead](#) and South Australia's [See Me for Me](#).
- Public forums, including the first [ADS National Forum](#) held on 2–3 November 2022, and first [ADS State Forum](#), hosted by Queensland on 19 June 2023.



Implementing Australia's Disability Strategy

We have committed to regularly report on activity and measure progress to be transparent about how outcomes are changing for people with disability.

The following provides a brief summary of what we have been doing to implement ADS. More information about implementation activities is available in the full Implementation Report, [ADS Hub on Disability Gateway](#), and from [state and territory government websites](#).

Roles and Responsibilities

ADS recognises that all levels of government have a role to play in reaching the goals of ADS, and identifies which level of government is responsible for the services and supports people with disability rely on, with many services and systems relying on governments working together. By working across government, we are bringing a focus on people with disability, and ADS, to areas outside of disability-specific agencies.

Examples of activities in this implementation area include:

- The Australian Government funding the First Peoples Disability Network to develop and support the early implementation of the Community Controlled Disability Sector Strengthening Plan, and to develop and implement the [National Disability Footprint](#).
- Embedding accessibility or inclusion provisions in mainstream services and systems, such as improving hospital discharge and care pathways for people with disability.
- Legislative reforms to strengthen rights, protections, and safeguards for people with disability, such as Victoria's [Disability and Social Services Regulation Amendment Act 2023 \(Vic\)](#), South Australia's [Disability Inclusion \(Review Recommendations\) Amendment Bill 2023](#), and establishing a Disability Commissioner in Tasmania.

Guiding Principles

To achieve the vision of ADS, governments are committed to the development and implementation of policies, programs, services, and systems which reflect the human rights principles of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. Governments have agreed to use the Guiding Principles of ADS—which reflects the principles of the United Nations Convention—in their work.

Examples of activities implementing the Guiding Principles include:

- Developing of a Guide to the Guiding Principles to assist governments, business and the non-government sector apply the Guiding Principles in their work.
- Establishing mechanisms to centre the voice of people with disability in government advice and policy development.
- Reflecting the Guiding Principles in state and agency disability plans, such as in [Inclusive Victoria: state disability plan 2022–2026](#), or South Australia indirectly embedding the Guiding Principles in government agency [Disability Access and Inclusion Plans](#).

Engaging People with Disability

We are committed to people with disability taking a central and active role in the implementation of ADS. We are strengthening our efforts to ensure the needs of people with disability are considered. We are meeting our ADS commitment to yearly forums. States and territories are also undertaking engagement activities as part of their jurisdictional disability plans.

ADS Engagement Plan will ensure the expressed views, lived experience and ongoing advice from people with disability is reflected in the development of policies and programs that affect them.

The Australian Government has developed the Good Practice Guidelines for Engaging with People with Disability. This guide will help government and non-government organisations to improve their engagement activities to better support the participation and inclusion of people with disability.

Examples of activities engaging with people with disability in implementing ADS include:

- The first ADS National Forum in Canberra, ACT, on 2–3 November 2022.
- The first ADS State Forum in Brisbane, Queensland, on 19 June 2023.
- Development of Towards Inclusive Practice Guide, supporting governments to be more inclusive when engaging people with intellectual disability.
- Co-designing government policy with people with disability, such as NDIA's Supported Decision-Making Policy.
- Disability advisory committees or groups to provide advice to government, such as Northern Territory's Disability Advisory Council or ACT's Disability Reference Group.
- Accessible communications and events to support state disability plans, such as Western Australia's promotion of their State Disability Strategy or ACT's development of their Disability Strategy.

Engagement with people with disability remains a high priority, and we recognise the need to involve and co-design policies and programs with people with disability. Under ADS Engagement Plan, there is a commitment to deliver at least one public Forum or consultation every year. Consistent with ADS Roadmap, public consultations are planned for 2024, 2027 and 2030.

Targeted Action Plans

A new approach taken with ADS was to include the commitment to Targeted Action Plans (TAPs) to better facilitate improved outcomes for all people with disability. The TAPs were developed to apply an intensive focus over one-to-three years to achieve specific deliverables. The first 5 TAPs launched with ADS are focused on improving Employment, Community Attitudes, Early Childhood, Safety, and Emergency Management.

The first annual TAPs Report, for the period 3 December 2021 to 30 June 2022, was published in November 2022. It reported that over 80% of actions had been completed or on track. The second annual TAPs Report, for the period 1 July 2022 to 30 June 2023 will be published soon.

The TAPs have provided an important initial focal point for governments to progress action. We acknowledge feedback from ADS Advisory Council and the disability sector that the design and focus of TAPs need to evolve, and that future TAPs need to identify more ambitious actions to drive change, and do so in a more strategic and aligned way across governments.

The Australian Government has commenced early work to consider, in collaboration with states and territory governments, those areas which will be a focus of the next set of TAPs. This will be guided by input from people with disability. We are aiming to finalise the next TAPs to commence during 2024–2025.

Associated Plans

Tangible actions are required to deliver on the Outcome Areas of ADS. In addition to TAPs, ADS is also supported by Associated Plans that have a longer-term focus on high-level priorities for specific cohorts. The Australian Government is developing guidance to assist government agencies in their development of Associated Plans.

ADS Associated Plans include:

- Employ My Ability, launched on 3 December 2021, is the Australian Government's 10-year commitment to improving employment outcomes for people with disability.
- The National Disability Advocacy Framework 2023–2025 and its associated *Disability Advocacy Work Plan* represent the beginning of ongoing work by the Australian, state and territory governments, to improve alignment of disability advocacy services by committing to joint work in key areas.
- National Roadmap for Improving the Health of People with Intellectual Disability, led by the Australian Government, sets out comprehensive actions and outlines how we can create a health system where people with intellectual disability are valued, respected and have access to high-quality, timely and comprehensive health care.

Through Australia's National Cultural Policy, *Revive*, the Australian Government has committed \$5 million to fund implementation activities for an Arts and Disability Associated Plan to support people with disability to access and participate in the cultural and creative life of Australia. The Arts and Disability Associated Plan is currently under development.

Outcomes Framework

One of the most important improvements introduced with the launch of ADS was the implementation of the Outcomes Framework. The Outcomes Framework is measuring, tracking, and reporting on outcomes for people with disability across the Outcome Areas and Policy Priorities of ADS.

The [Outcomes Framework](#) interactive and accessible reporting webpages were launched on 14 December 2022. Outcomes Framework reporting includes quarterly updates, a [dashboard tool](#), and [annual reports](#). The first annual report was published on 28 February 2023. The [Data Improvement Plan](#) will support the collection of data for future measures.

To improve the information available on community attitudes, the Australian Government has committed to surveys that will occur every 3 years to measure community attitudes. The first wave of ADS Survey was conducted in 2022, collecting data from approximately 18,000 people. Data collected included responses from people with disability as well as the broader Australian population. The data collected through ADS Survey — *Share with us* includes new data for the 7 Community Attitudes measures that was reported on for the first time on 5 October 2023.

As part of the first wave of ADS Survey, ANU and Purple Orange conducted one Nested (qualitative) Study focused on people with intellectual disabilities' experiences with community attitudes in the education, health, justice and legal, personal and community support services, and employment sectors. The Nested Study Report is available on [ADS Hub on Disability Gateway](#).

Improving the Data

We are committed to collecting and sharing relevant data to support effective monitoring and reporting of outcomes for people with disability in order to drive change. Data is at the core of our evidence-based approach to implementation of ADS.

The development of ADS [Data Improvement Plan](#) is to ensure data needed to measure outcomes for people with disability is collected, shared and progressively improved over the life of ADS. It will also identify where data needs to be linked between systems to improve our understanding of the impact of ADS.

Examples of activities improving data include:

- The Australian Government has committed a total of \$68.3 million for the analysis, research and delivery of the National Disability Data Asset, which will be Australia's most comprehensive disability data asset.
- Lead Australian Government agencies have committed to producing portfolio Data Improvement Plans to set out how disability data can be improved in their portfolios.
- The Australian Bureau of Statistics [2022 Survey of Disability, Ageing and Carers](#) completed fieldwork in early 2023, with results due mid-2024.
- State government support for data sharing in the disability advocacy sector, such as in Western Australia.
- Development of state disability data strategies and enhanced mechanisms to improve the way data is used and shared, such as the NSW Government Data Strategy or South Australia's use of Family Complexity indicators in data collection.

Building the Evidence Base and Evaluations

The implementation of ADS is based on an evidence-based approach. This means we will incorporate research evidence, along with advice from people with disability, into our decision-making and how we will take action. Good evidence provides us with a foundation on where and how we will achieve progress.

The National Disability Research Partnership (NDRP) will be instrumental in building the evidence base. The NDRP research agenda and practical guides for disability inclusive research will help drive improvements for people with disability. It will facilitate a collaborative and inclusive disability research program, and will fund research led by and with people with disability. The Australian Government has provided \$15 million to support the establishment and operation of the NDRP, from 2022–23 to 2024–25. The NDRP is expected to be established and fully operational by 2024.

Examples of activities building the evidence base and evaluations include:

- First Peoples Disability Network has engaged an independent consultant to support the ongoing monitoring and evaluation of the National Disability Footprint.
- Evaluations of state policies and strategies, such as Northern Territory's EmployAbility Strategy 2018–22 evaluation in 2023.
- The Voice of Queenslanders with Disability survey was undertaken in early 2023, with the Voice of Queenslanders with Disability report published on 19 June 2023. The survey and report were a collaboration between the Queensland Government, Queenslanders with Disability Network and Griffith University.
- An independent process and outcomes evaluation of the Disability Gateway was completed in June 2022.

Governance

Robust governance arrangements are key to supporting the effective implementation of activities across the nation that will improve outcomes for people with disability. *Australia's Disability Strategy 2021–2031* (p. 45; 59–60) outlines a Governance Model that is guiding our work and accountability.

Groups that contribute to ADS governance include:

- The Disability Reform Ministerial Council is the forum for Australian Government and state and territory ministers responsible for disability policy to drive national collaboration and coordination on reform in disability policy and implementation.
- ADS Advisory Council provides independent advice to Australian governments and disability ministers on the implementation of ADS. Its members are people with disability from the community and disability sector.
- The Disability Representative Organisation ADS Implementation Forum consists of a range of organisations representing the disability sector and people with disability. This forum is a key consultation point for the Australian Government to seek advice and feedback on ADS implementation activities.

ADS Online

ADS Hub on Disability Gateway offers a single place for news, resources and reports on ADS. Launched in mid-2021, the Australian Government has been committed to maintaining and growing ADS online presence. Core information is provided in accessible formats, including Easy Read and 14 community languages including Auslan. Other accessible formats, like Braille, can be provided on request and work has commenced to include a number of First Nations languages in the future.

In the 2 years since the launch of the ADS Hub, new content includes:

- Annual Targeted Action Plans reports.
- Information on ADS Forums and consultations.
- ADS Advisory Council details and communiques.
- New resources, such as the Data Improvement Plan and the Good Practice Guidelines for Engaging with People with Disability.
- Links to the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare's ADS Outcomes Framework interactive website.

With the ADS Hub constantly expanding, a review and refresh is underway with improvements being rolled out from late 2023 to early 2024.

