



Creating
an inclusive
community
together

Australia's Disability Strategy 2021-2031

Advisory Council 2024 Annual Report

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A word from the Chair

Jane Spring AM, Chair of Australia's Disability Strategy Advisory Council



As Chair of [Australia's Disability Strategy](#) (ADS) Advisory Council (Advisory Council), I wish to acknowledge the immense effort of the Advisory Council over the last 12 months, recognising the contributions of members past and present.

2024 has been a year of reform in the disability landscape on all levels with the Government's Response to the Final Report of the Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect, and Exploitation of People with Disability (DRC), and ongoing consideration of the Independent

Review of the National Disability Insurance Scheme, amongst key reviews and reports. The Advisory Council has drawn on the significant impetus for transformative change and we appreciate that the work of embedding inclusion and accessibility across Australian society continues.

In line with the vision of *Australia's Disability Strategy 2021-31* (the Strategy), we aspire to create an inclusive Australian society that ensures people with disability can fulfil their potential, as equal members of the community. The guiding framework for all governments, the Strategy sets out practical changes that will assist people with disability.

In 2024 the Advisory Council engaged with governments through advice to the Disability Reform Ministerial Council (DRMC), and provided expertise and lived experience, from members including our state and territory representatives. The Advisory Council recognises and values the need for an 'all governments' approach to reform, as people with disability do not see their lives and the challenges they face confined to a single portfolio or level of government.

As Chair I would also like to acknowledge the opportunities presented to me to build connections and engage deeply in support of the Strategy. I was fortunate to be a member of the Australian Government delegation to the 17th Session of the Conference of States Parties to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (11-13 June 2024) in New York. I also attended the 'Your Say, Your Way' Tasmanian Forum for the Strategy in August 2024. Highlighting international and state and territory practice is a key focus, recognising we should encourage governments to 'race to the top.'

The Advisory Council will continue to help shape the Strategy and its implementation, to enhance the lives of people with disability so that everyone can feel included, valued, and live safe and meaningful lives.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jane Spring". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Jane Spring AM
Chair
ADS Advisory Council

2024 in a snapshot

The Advisory Council's key purpose is to provide high-level advice to the Australian, state and territory Disability Ministers and governments (including local governments) on the implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of the Strategy. The primary function of the Advisory Council is to provide ongoing independent advice, feedback, and recommendations at a national level on the Strategy. The Advisory Council is guided by its Work Plan and Terms of Reference, endorsed annually by DRMC.

2024 commenced with the Chair of the Advisory Council presenting formal advice to DRMC on the Targeted Action Plans (TAPs) under the Strategy, and the First Annual Report for Australia's Disability Strategy Outcomes Framework (Outcomes Framework). Advice to DRMC outlined how governments can strengthen the design and impact of new TAPs, through a focus on more meaningful, but fewer, actions that demonstrate a coordinated approach to the change required across all jurisdictions. A more coordinated approach across jurisdictions will enhance the sharing of good practice and enable more transparent reporting.

The Chair's advice to DRMC also noted that the ongoing reporting against the ADS Outcomes Framework is critical in keeping government accountable to the Strategy's commitment to improve the lives of people with disability.

The Advisory Council also provided advice and feedback to the Department of Social Services (the department) throughout 2024 on key aspects of Strategy implementation, including the next set of TAPs, the [Review of the Strategy](#), and the [Data Improvement Plan 2024](#).

Across the year, the Advisory Council engaged with the Australian Government, including the Attorney-General's Department; Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications and the Arts; and the ACT Community Services and Justice and Community Safety Directorates. The Advisory Council also engaged with community advocates on tertiary education and disability employment, and the Disability Discrimination Commissioner Rosemary Kayess who shared her reflections on the Strategy and disability reform.

The Chair responded to correspondence from community advocates regarding opportunities to strengthen the Strategy in relation to information and communications, tertiary education, and the aged care system.

Following the invitation from the Hon Amanda Rishworth MP, the Minister for Social Services and for the National Disability Insurance Scheme, members of the Advisory Council participated in the panel to consider expressions of interest for the position of Chair for the National Disability Research Partnership (NDRP). As a key initiative under the Strategy, the NDRP will develop and implement a disability-led research agenda aligned with *Australia's Disability Strategy 2021-2031* and drive change in policy and practice that will improve the lives of people with disability. The Minister's considered invitation highlighted the value of Council members and the need for ongoing focus on the intersections between all aspects of the Strategy.

Accepting the panel's recommendation, the Minister for Social Services and for the National Disability Insurance Scheme announced the [new Chair of the NDRP in August 2024](#).

Key Achievements

2024 Advisory Council Meetings

The Advisory Council had 4 meetings in 2024, occurring in March, June, October and December.

In March the Advisory Council met in Sydney over two days, which included an address on key priorities from the Disability Discrimination Commissioner, Ms Rosemary Kayess.

Topics of discussion

- The Chair's presentation to DRMC providing formal advice from the Advisory Council on the Targeted Action Plans under ADS and the First Annual Report for ADS Outcomes Framework.
- The DRC consultations, including links to the NDIS Review and the timing of the Australian Government and state and territory joint responses to the recommendations.
- The recently established NDIS Provider and Workforce Registration Taskforce.
- The challenges faced by students with disability navigating the tertiary education system.
- The draft Arts and Disability Associated Plan being developed by the Office for the Arts.
- Emerging issues in the disability community, and discussed accessible beaches, changing places facilities, accessible medical services and ongoing challenges in the availability of accessible services in remote parts of Australia.
- Outcomes from the ADS Advisory Council Disability Housing Working Group held in February 2024, summarising intersecting challenges for people with disability in accessing appropriate housing, and topics for focus for 2024.
- ADS Review progress, and the role of the Advisory Council as a key source of expertise and lived experience, with engagement throughout the year to advise on Review outputs.
- Work commissioned by the department to understand and change community attitudes of people with disability.

In June the Advisory Council meeting was attended by both the incoming and outgoing state and territory representatives, with guest speaker the Hon Justine Elliot MP, Assistant Minister for Social Services and the Prevention of Family Violence also in attendance.

Topics of discussion

- Accountability and data approaches under the Strategy, including the Outcomes Framework, Data Improvement Plan and the National Disability Data Asset. A supporting paper and drop-in sessions were scheduled to support Advisory Council members understanding on the topic.
- Members noted the importance of prioritising the ADS Outcomes Framework and focusing on a few outcomes with a larger potential to positively impact people with disability, rather than treating everything on an equal basis.
- The ADS Review, early findings and recommendations, and the proposed consultation process, with Advisory Council member participation in ADS Review workshops during June as a feedback mechanism.
- The ACT's Disability Justice Strategy 2019 – 2029, as an example of good practice and practical implementation of the Strategy.
- The Advisory Council's involvement in the process to recommend a candidate for Chair of the National Disability Research Partnership.

- An update on membership and work of the Advisory Council's Housing Working Group.

In October the Advisory Council considered the Attorney-Generals' Department Disability Discrimination Act Review (DDA Review) approach, and the Advisory Council draft Work Plan for 2025.

Topics of discussion

- The Advisory Council noted that the disability community would be interested in how the DDA Review could: celebrate good practice in promoting inclusion and accessibility; reduce the administrative burden on those making a complaint; provide clear compliance processes for breaches. The Advisory Council also requested ongoing updates as the DDA Review process progresses, and the opportunity to engage with the process early.
- Advisory Council members requested a more structured approach to the Council's work for the 2025 Work Plan, to support development of a collective and considered view on focus topics.

The December meeting focussed on recent updates in relation to the DRMC, the ADS Review Report and the refreshed Strategy, new TAPs, the 2025 ADS external evaluation, the Advisory Council's draft Work Plan for 2025, proposed changes to the Advisory Council's Terms of Reference and the approach to the 2024 Annual Report.

Topics of discussion

- It was noted that DRMC had endorsed several key Strategy outputs that were informed by Advisory Council feedback, including the: ADS Review Report; next round of Targeted Action Plans, 2024 ADS Data Improvement Plan and Guide to Applying ADS.
- Advisory Council Members were introduced to the Guide to Engaging People with Disability in Evaluation, designed to help policy makers, researchers, service providers, and others understand what people with disability want out of the Strategy in practical terms. Scope for the Evaluation of ADS will include all aspects of the Strategy, including operation of the Advisory Council.
- The Advisory Council noted the opportunity to be a part of the DDA Review, as a way to influence transformative systemic change for people with disability.

2024 Advisory Council Briefings and Workshops

In addition to the 4 formal Advisory Council meetings held in 2024, Advisory Council members also participated in briefings and workshops to engage deeply on priority areas of focus relating to the Strategy.

1. Disability Reform Agenda Briefing

- Information on the Government's Response to the Final Report of the Disability Royal Commission, the NDIS Review, and the significant work underway to improve the disability ecosystem.

2. ADS Introductory Briefing

- An opportunity for Advisory Council members to revisit how the Council should work; the interactions between the various Strategy mechanisms; and how the Strategy intersects with all levels of government. This briefing clarified how all parts of the Strategy fit together, the tools the Strategy uses to create change, ADS reporting and the role of the Advisory Council across Strategy implementation.

3. Guide to Applying ADS Workshop

- An opportunity for members to provide verbal feedback and ask questions about the Guide to Applying ADS, as a commitment under the ADS Roadmap.

4. ADS Implementation Briefing

- Enabled the Advisory Council to provide input on the ADS Review and the 3 new TAPs: Community Attitudes; Safety, Rights and Justice; and Inclusive Homes and Communities. The Advisory Council identified opportunities to strengthen the Council's role through stronger coordination and engagement, which is integrated into Council's 2025 Work Plan.

5. Data Improvement Plan (DIP) Workshops

- Supported the Advisory Council to understand how the new DIP works to ensure that governments are delivering on commitments under the Strategy, with a focus on collecting and reporting data for measures under the ADS Outcomes Framework and addressing data gaps.

6. Welcome to the ADS Advisory Council

- Provided new members (both Core Members and state and territory representatives) with a snapshot of the role the Advisory Council, what it does, how members can contribute and what Council has achieved, with the opportunity to discuss preferred mechanisms for engagement.

Other Meetings

ADS Jurisdictional Disability Advisory Leads

The ADS Jurisdictional Disability Advisory Leads meetings enable jurisdictional representatives to share information and updates on disability policy, programs and funding arrangements.

The Chair of the Advisory Council also Chairs these meetings, which are attended by each state and territory disability council and operate as a way to keep lines of communication open, grow the network of disability leaders and share news and promising policy developments. The meetings also promote an early understanding of disability community perspectives and can assist the ADS Advisory Council to stay informed on jurisdictional developments and good practice.

The Advisory Council Chair hosted two Jurisdictional Disability Advisory Leads meetings during 2024, as an information sharing forum with representatives from Victoria, New South Wales, Queensland, South Australia, Western Australia, the Northern Territory and ACT Disability Advisory Councils.

ADS Advisory Council Housing Working Group

2024 saw the continuation of the Advisory Council's Housing Working Group, the Advisory Council's first Sub-group focussed on issues relating to disability housing in Australia.

The HWG provides a standing forum to establish an ongoing focus on housing within the work of the Advisory Council, to support effective consideration of the ADS 'Inclusive Homes and Communities' Outcome Area, and its associated Policy Priorities and Outcomes Framework measures.

HWG topics of discussion have included specialist disability accommodation under the National Disability Insurance Scheme, modifications and accessibility of rental properties, the application of the National Construction Code's Liveable Housing Design Standard to new and existing housing stock, and disability discrimination in housing.

HWG discussions across 2024 included the Advisory Council's role in TAP governance, and the development of a new Inclusive Homes and Communities TAP.

2024 Members

As Advisory Council Chair, I would especially like to acknowledge the contributions of members who departed during 2024, including Amy James (filling a casual vacancy in the Council) and Natalie Wade (Core Member).

I would also like to welcome new Core Members to the Advisory Council, following their appointment by the Minister of Social Services and for the National Disability Insurance Scheme in June 2024: Uncle Wilfred Prince and Akii Ngo. Both are valuable additions to the Advisory Council, bringing much insight and information from the vast amount of work they have done giving voices to their communities.

Outgoing state and territory members - The Advisory Council saw the 12 month membership terms end for 4 state and territory representatives during 2024, representing Queensland (Nigel Webb), Western Australia (Dr Rita Kleinfeld-Fowell), Tasmania (Dr Katherine Elliston) and the ACT (Renée Heaton). These representatives shared valuable knowledge and insights from their jurisdictions. Nigel Webb and Katherine Elliston also participated in the NDRP Chair expression of interest process, with Nigel instrumental in encouraging the Advisory Council's focus on housing.

Incoming state and territory members - The Advisory Council has 4 new state and territory members for the 12-month term from 2024 to 2025 including: New South Wales (Kelly Cox), Victoria (Chris Varney), the Northern Territory (Sarah Skopellos) and South Australia (Sisaleo Philavong).

Key Priorities for 2025

The **ADS Advisory Council 2025 Work Plan** is pending agreement by the DRMC in the first quarter of 2025. The Work Plan supports the Advisory Council Chair to determine appropriate agendas, priorities, guests and focus for each meeting, and enables DRMC to consider the outcomes of the Advisory Council's activities and meetings.

The Advisory Council proposed the following topics of focus for 2025, under the following 3 categories:

1. Formal advice to the Disability Reform Ministerial Council for the consideration of Ministers:

- Reporting for the next round of TAPs. This includes initial advice on 'what a good TAP report should look like', and subsequent analysis of TAP reports against that standard, with a strong focus on intersectionality and the diversity of the disability community.
- The Council's Housing Working Group will develop, for Council consideration, observations on how ADS is being implemented through the Housing portfolio, to support ongoing cross-portfolio implementation of the Strategy.

2. Informal advice on ADS deliverables:

- Development of the *Guide to Involving People with Disability in Evaluation*, and other approaches to strengthen the evaluation of ADS.
- The proposed new Associated Plan on Accessible Information and Communications and relevant activities, in response to DRC Recommendation 6.1 and 6.2.
- The Government's proposals to improve community attitudes and understanding of disability and reduce harm.
- ADS data and research mechanisms, including the National Disability Data Asset, the National Disability Research Partnership and the ADS Outcomes Framework and associated data improvement work.

3. Current reforms or government work that intersect with ADS, for example:

- Implementation of the [Aviation White Paper](#) in respect of accessibility and inclusion for transport.
- Cohorts including First Nations people with disability and women and girls with disability, and the interactions between ADS and other relevant frameworks and strategies.
- Relevant recommendations arising from the DRC (Recommendations 4.1-4.21: Disability Rights Act; 4.23-4.34: Disability discrimination reform).

The 2024 annual review process for the **Advisory Council's Terms of Reference** (ToR) has occurred, with the ToR also planned for agreement by the DRMC in the first quarter of 2025. The ToR sets out the Advisory Council's key purpose, providing high-level advice to the Australian, state and territory Disability Ministers and governments (including local governments) on the implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of the Strategy. This includes a focus on providing independent advice, feedback, and recommendations at a national level on the Strategy.

Council will lose valuable members whose terms finish in 2025. However, this provides an opportunity to introduce new members who will provide significant and diverse experience and skills which will support the Advisory Council moving forward.

Appendix

Meeting dates 2024

- 5-6 March 2024 – two-day face to face meeting held in Sydney
- 27 June 2024 - Virtual
- 16 October 2024 - Virtual
- 6 December 2024 - Virtual

Membership 2024

* Term ended during the 2024 calendar year

Member	Role	Term
Jane Spring AM	Chair Interim Chair	27 November 2023 - 31 December 2026 1 July 2023 – 31 December 2023
Cindy Liu	Core Member	9 January 2022 - 9 January 2025
Seriako Stephen	Core Member	23 December 2021 - 23 December 2025
Akii Ngo	Core Member	26 June 2024 - 26 June 2027
Uncle Wilfred Prince	Core Member	26 June 2024 - 26 June 2027
* Natalie Wade	Core Member (resigned)	17 January 2022 - 30 September 2024
* Amy James	Core Member (resigned)	18 July 2023 – 29 February 2024
Nigel Webb	Qld Representative (term ending)	18 July 2023 – 17 July 2024
* Katherine Elliston	Tas Representative (term ending)	18 July 2023 – 17 July 2024
* Rita Kleinfeld-Fowell	WA Representative (term ending)	18 July 2023 – 17 July 2024
* Renee Heaton	ACT Representative (term ending)	18 July 2023 – 17 July 2024
Kelly Cox	NSW Representative (term commencing)	1 June 2024 – 1 September 2025
Chris Varney	Vic Representative (term commencing)	1 June 2024 – 1 September 2025
Sisaleo Philavong	SA Representative (term commencing)	1 June 2024 – 1 September 2025
Sarah Skopellos	NT Representative (term commencing)	1 June 2024 – 1 September 2025

The Advisory Council is supported by a Secretariat in the Department of Social Services. For further information, please contact: ADSAdvisoryCouncil@dss.gov.au