

# People with Disability Australia 2022 Federal Election Platform

Health and wellbeing . . . . .	2
Employment and financial security . . . . .	3
Inclusive homes and communities . . . . .	4
Safety, rights and justice . . . . .	5
Personal and community support via the NDIS . . . . .	6
Education and learning . . . . .	7
Community attitudes . . . . .	8

## About us

**As the national voice of Australians with disability, we empower, champion and celebrate all people with disability.**

We're Australia's national peak advocacy organisation for people with disability. Since 1981, we've been advancing and protecting the rights, health and wellbeing of the people and communities we serve.

Led by people with disability, PWDA represents the interests of people with all kinds of disability. We're a not-for-profit community-based organisation and our members comprise a diverse range of individuals and organisations from across Australia.

We work both nationally and internationally, and our work is grounded in a human rights framework that recognises the United Nations' Convention on the Rights of Persons With Disability and related mechanisms as fundamental tools for advancing the rights of people with disability.

We deliver our programs, services and activities in partnership with thousands of members and supporters as well as a variety of stakeholders across the government, disability, education and research sectors. We receive funding from a range of sources including the Australian Government, NSW Government and donations from our supporters.

# Health and wellbeing



## The commitments we're seeking

- Prioritise the safety and protection of all people with disability in all disasters, including the current COVID-19 pandemic
- Commit to implementing the **disability sector's call** for increased protection for people with disability during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Commit to funding the disability sector to co-produce a detailed plan for protecting the health and wellbeing of people with disability in a world where we must now live with COVID-19.

## Background

Many health issues impact people with disability. However, the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic is of paramount concern. The variant waves which continue to sweep across our nation are putting our lives and health at unacceptable risk with increased danger of infection, massive support worker shortages, and very limited access to regular testing.

Despite being at much higher risk, people with disability were **actively deprioritised** for protection during the various lockdowns of 2020 and 2021 and

the current 'let-it-rip' approach to easing restrictions has been a disaster for people with disability, with many in the disability community feeling like they're acceptable collateral damage in the race to return to normal.

We've been advocating for decades for better outcomes for the disability community, but we keep on being left behind. For a country as wealthy and developed as Australia, people with disability expect and demand that our governments keep us safe.

COVID is now set to be an endemic health issue which means we need to learn to live with the virus. This clearly presents a range of vital health, social and economic concerns for people with disability. Australia needs a plan which provides a comprehensive and practical approach to protecting people with disability from COVID in the months and years ahead. What we're seeking is the resolve and funding to secure the health and safety of people with disability now and into the future.



# Employment and financial security



## The commitments we're seeking

### Financial security

- Provide life-long access to the Disability Support Pension
- Abolish barriers to accessing Centrelink's **Disability Support Pension**, including fixing the **DSP Impairment Tables**.

- Get rid of the **BasicsCard**, **Cashless Debit cards** and all forms of compulsory **income management**

### Employment

- Deliver more effective pathways to employment that are co-designed with people with disability and take into account the needs of all people with a disability.

## Background

It's expensive to live with disability and chronic illness. Only about 10% of us have access to **National Disability Insurance Scheme** (NDIS) supports, so issues related to employment and income are essential to our health, wellbeing and full and equal participation in society.

People with disability need to have economic independence, which means enough money to have an adequate standard of living as well as the right to work and be paid properly, as per articles

**19, 27** and **28** of the United Nations **Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD)**.

However, 1 in 2 Australians with disability are unemployed because we face many barriers to finding and keeping a job, including long-standing issues with the Disability Discrimination Act 1995. Australia's current **Disability Employment Services** program is making little progress in addressing these barriers, and many people with disability remain segregated in **Australian Disability Enterprises** where they're paid as little as \$1 an hour with no pathway to employment within the mainstream workforce.

For those Australians with disability who are unable to, or have partial capacity to work, Australia has the second highest risk of relative poverty in the OECD. We need security of income so we can continue to maintain our health, live with dignity and be free from poverty. This means we need certainty of access to an adequate **Disability Support Pension** (DSP).



# Inclusive homes and communities



## The commitments we're seeking

- Address the urgent issues within housing, including the National Disability Insurance Scheme homes-and-living supports such as Specialist Disability Accommodation and Supported Independent Living.
- Commit to the recommendations in our Disabled People's Organisation Australia **Segregation Position Statement** on segregation of people with disability.
- Invest in accessible, affordable and contemporary social housing.

## Background

Many people with disability live in poverty, struggle in unaffordable housing, or are languishing in congregate settings and institutions. Many of us also require accessible housing so we can live like others in the community. However, there has been no real outcomes for decades in relation to affordable and accessible housing for people with disability, despite this being a primary goal of the previous **2010–2020 National Disability Strategy**.

As a result, many living with disability are being forced to stay in group homes, large institutions, or boarding houses, which are places they do not want to live. We have

a right to live independently in suitable, accessible, affordable and contemporary housing in the community, just like people without disability.

We need a real commitment with accountability to ensure people with disability are housed appropriately and we need to see that actioned via the new **Australia's Disability Strategy 2021 – 2031** along with a broader national disability housing plan that prioritises universal design.

Rethinking **Specialist Disability Accommodation** (SDA) in the **National Disability Insurance Scheme** is also a priority. The current SDA provisions and limits with **Supported Independent Living** are forcing many of us into unsuitable and unregulated accommodation where the housing provider can also be the provider of support services, a clear conflict of interest that disempowers us and exposes us to greater risks of violence, neglect, exploitation and abuse.



# Safety, rights and justice



## The commitments we're seeking

- Implement the recommendations from the Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People with Disability, including the **interim recommendations of the Disability Royal Commission.**
- Implement the recommendations of the Royal Commission into Aged Care Quality and Safety.
- Implement the recommendations from the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse.

## Background

People with disability are at increased risk of violence at home in and in the community. We need to feel safe and be safe in the places we live, work and take part in everyday activities.

Thanks to the work of three Royal Commissions, we know the kind of action that needs to be taken to keep us safe. The next Australian Government must implement the recommendations of the **Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People with Disability (DRC)** and the **Royal Commission into Aged Care Quality and Safety (ACRC)** and the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse (IRCSA).



The DRC has found the segregation that people with disability experience in education, homes, employment and day programs can lead to violence, abuse, neglect and exploitation. It's time to take up the disability sector's campaign call and **#EndSegregation** to improve our safety.

The DRC has noted unauthorised restrictive practices are still allowed across the country, where people use medicines and physical restraints to keep us under control. This breaches our international human rights under **Article 5** of the UN **Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities**, and doesn't justly address the contested notion of 'behaviours of concern'.

The Government should also be working to replace substitute decision-making regimes with supported decision-making systems.

The ACRC wanted people in aged care to be free from mistreatment, neglect and the harm of bad care. It also wanted proper complaint mechanisms. These things still need to happen.

Australia needs to make the places people with disability live their lives much safer.

# Personal and community support via the NDIS



## The commitments we're seeking

- Commit to full and transparent co-design processes for any planned or proposed changes to the National Disability Insurance Scheme, including planned or proposed legislation.
- Remove barriers to accessing the NDIS for marginalised communities, especially migrants and refugees, and ensure people with disability who are not able to access the NDIS, are able to do so.

## Background

The **National Disability Insurance Scheme** was meant to transform the way people with disability receive supports that allow us to participate in the community fully and equally. While the scheme has been a success in many ways, it's still not performing as intended and so Australia is breaching our relevant commitments as per the United Nations **Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities**.

The NDIS is still not underpinned by transparent, accountable fair mechanisms. It doesn't have secure, transparent long-term funding. And despite having NDIS plans, people with disability are still

living in unsuitable congregate housings such as nursing homes, boarding houses, hospitals and group homes.

Access to the NDIS for eligible people with disability is a human right and is underpinned by Australia's obligations under the CRPD. This means all people with disability eligible should have access, regardless of place of origin.

We deserve a secure, sustainable NDIS and appropriate NDIS plans and funding. Without supports and services, we are at increased risk of harm or worse.

We all need the NDIS to get back on track and do its job for people with disability. The NDIS, when performing as intended, will support our full participation in society as well as the economy. Ensuring the NDIS is efficient, effective and fit for purpose into the future is a win-win for all Australians.



# Education and learning



## The commitments we're seeking

- Implement the **Driving Change: A roadmap for achieving inclusive education in Australia** developed by the **Australian Coalition for Inclusive Education**.

## Background

Just like every other Australian, people with disability are entitled to a general education, where we're treated equally. However, many of us still experience discrimination at all levels of the education system.

Our right to an inclusive education is an international human right found in **Article 24** of the UN **Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities** to which Australia is a signatory. The next Australian Government must commit to making our education system truly inclusive.

The **Australian Coalition for Inclusive Education** has developed a **Driving Change Roadmap**. This pledge involves

Australia becoming a just society, with an education system for all, where people are welcomed in an inclusive environment where diversity is respected, and people's access needs and participation goals and outcomes are addressed and valued.

Pledging to support inclusivity involves encouraging funding and support for places where we can thrive, including mainstream education facilities that welcome students with disability.

Our next government must commit to the **Driving Change Roadmap** so people with disability can experience all the benefits of an inclusive education across the country – in our primary schools, high schools, TAFEs and universities – so we can aim for, and secure, great jobs and good salaries.



# Community attitudes



## The commitments we're seeking

- Co-design and develop a national anti-ableism campaign to address ableism, negative attitudes, discrimination, misconceptions and bias against people with disability, including in employment.
- Improve visibility and representation of people with disability through targeted opportunities in all sectors including community organisations, business, politics, media, sports and the arts.

## Background

People with disability encounter **ableism** and discrimination every day. For us to equally participate on a level playing field with other Australians, we need workplaces and home environments that are free from ableism.

We need all settings and places to embrace us and welcome the **reasonable adjustments** we need to participate equitably in our society and economy.

That's why we want the next Australian Government to commit to a national campaign to combat ableism, and the negative attitudes, misconceptions and bias that come with it.

## Article 8 of the UN Convention of the Rights of People with Disabilities

requires exactly this kind of commitment from National Governments. **Canada did it**, we can too.

We also want action to improve our visibility and representation in the community. We need back-up from government so we can take part – and be seen to be taking part – in everyday life, in the political arena, the media, in the sporting arena and in the arts. When we get involved in things, we play an instrumental, important and influential role in the community, and community attitudes towards us improve.

Our next Australian Government must help people with disability become more involved in society by creating targeted opportunities for us to step forward and step up. Our participation in everyday life will help reduce discrimination, create meaningful change and improve attitudes towards us. And importantly, it'll help people leave behind the ableist attitudes that hold us back.



## Contact information

We welcome enquires and feedback about our 2022 Federal Election Platform from our members, supporters and sector partners.

To discuss any relevant issues, please contact our Policy Team:

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A voice  
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