



**PEOPLE WITH DISABILITY
AUSTRALIA**

2025 Federal Election Platform

Our votes, our future



**A voice of
our own**

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About PWDA

People with Disability Australia (PWDA) is a national disability rights and advocacy organisation made up of, and led by, people with disability. We have a vision of a socially just, accessible and inclusive community in which the contribution, potential and diversity of people with disability are not only recognised and respected but also celebrated.



PWDA was established in 1981, during the International Year of Disabled Persons. We are a peak, non-profit, non-government organisation that represents the interests of people with all kinds of disability. We are funded by the Australian Government as the national peak for LGBTQIA+ people with disability. We also represent people with disability at the United Nations, particularly in relation to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD).

Our work is grounded in a human rights framework that recognises the CRPD and related mechanisms as fundamental tools for advancing the rights of people with disability.

PWDA is a founding member of Disabled People's Organisations Australia (DPO Australia), along with the First People's Disability Network, National Ethnic Disability Alliance and Women with Disabilities Australia. DPOs collectively form a disability rights movement that places people with disability at the centre of decision-making in all aspects of our lives.

The work of PWDA embraces the 'Nothing About Us, Without Us' motto of the international disability community and Disabled Peoples' International, the international organisation representing national organisations of people with disability in over 130 countries.

Setting the context



PWDA is proud to be a national cross-disability rights and advocacy organisation, led by and for people with disability. We are a voice of our own for people with disability, in all their diversity, and the national peak for LGBTQIA+ people with disability.

With 5.5 million Australians identifying as having disability, our community is a significant voting bloc with the power to shape the outcome of the 2025 Federal Election.

The upcoming election is a critical moment to secure long-overdue commitments to economic security, human rights and full inclusion for people with disability. Recent government responses to key disability reform processes — the [Disability Royal Commission](#) and the [NDIS Review](#) — have failed to meet the disability community’s expectations. Legislative changes have placed supports at risk, and systemic underfunding and failure to prioritise us in policies continues to leave people with disability behind.

- [5.5 million Australians with disability.](#)
- [706,000 NDIS participants.](#)
- Millions more friends, family and allies.

**We are voters. We will decide this election.
We demand better. Can we count on your support?**



Our call to action

PWDA calls on all political candidates and parties to commit to our seven key priorities to advance disability rights and ensure the full economic and social inclusion of Australians with disability.

1. Invest in the NDIS

Guarantee long-term, sustainable funding, ensure participant control over our supports and prevent cost-cutting that restricts access to essential supports.

2. Fund Nationally Consistent Foundational Supports

Ensure disability supports outside the NDIS are consistently available and delivered. These supports are essential not optional for the 5.5 million Australians with disability, including the nearly 5 million who aren't on the NDIS.

3. Raise the Rate

Increase income support payments, including the Disability Support Pension (DSP) and JobSeeker, to above the poverty line so people with disability can afford the cost of living and achieve financial security. Increase Commonwealth Rent Assistance to cover the real cost of accessible housing.

4. Make Housing Accessible

Mandate the “Livable Housing Design Silver Standard” in the National Construction Code across all states and territories and commit to a national housing plan that meets the needs of people with disability.

5. Ensure Disability Representation in Government

Create a Minister for Disability Inclusion in Federal Cabinet and establish a dedicated Department of Disability Equality and Inclusion.

6. Protect Our Human Rights

Strengthen disability rights through a Human Rights Act and improvements to the Disability Discrimination Act. Fully fund individual and systemic advocacy services so people with disability can protect and enforce their rights.

7. Support Diversity in the Public Sector

Increase employment of people with disability and safeguard diversity, equity, and inclusion programs in federal public sector workplaces.



Each of these priorities is detailed below.



Our seven priorities



1. Invest in the NDIS

The National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) is a vital investment in the long-term economic and social inclusion of people with disability. The Scheme is also a key contributor to the Australian economy – for every \$1 invested in the NDIS, \$2.25 in economic value is generated for Australia.

The NDIS is also a major driver of employment. Jobs in the NDIS are real and much needed sources of employment for Australians. Every \$1 billion in NDIS underfunding results in 10,200 job losses which equates to a 1% decline in employment, a 0.14% drop in GDP and a \$2.25 billion reduction in national economic activity.

The NDIS prevents unnecessary hospitalisations, reduces reliance on crisis services and lowers long-term government expenditure by providing early intervention and ongoing support.

Most importantly the NDIS enables people with disability to live independently, participate in the workforce and contribute to their communities, reducing reliance on other government support programs.

Any funding cuts and eligibility restrictions would not only weaken the Scheme's effectiveness but also increase costs for Australia in the long run. If participant choice and control, which has been integral to the Scheme's success, is weakened, participants will face setbacks to accessing essential supports with expenses shifting to other sectors such as healthcare and social services, ultimately costing Australia more in the long-term.

The next Federal Government must:

- Guarantee long-term, sustainable funding to maintain the integrity of the NDIS.
- Protect participant choice and control, ensuring the Scheme continues to support the actual needs of people with disability.
- Prevent or reverse cost-cutting measures and reforms that reduce access to essential supports for people with disability, which ultimately increases costs in other government services.

Benefits:

A fully funded and participant-led NDIS enables people with disability to live independently, participate in the workforce and contribute to their communities, while reducing pressure on other government services.



2. Fund Nationally Consistent Foundational Supports

For the nearly 5 million Australians with disability who are not eligible for the NDIS Foundational Supports are essential, not optional. These disability-specific services outside of the NDIS are anticipated to include community-based services, early intervention and peer support, and more specialised supports such as home and community care, aids and equipment and psychosocial supports. They will play a crucial role in supporting full economic and social inclusion for all people with disability in Australia, including LGBTQIA+ people with disability.

Despite their critical role, there is no long-term national agreement on how these supports will be funded and delivered, leaving many people with disability without critical assistance, including people currently being moved off the NDIS before these Foundational Supports are in place.

Underfunding these supports will cost Australia more in the long run. The next Federal Government must work with state and territory governments to provide co-funding guarantees to ensure these services are available equitably nationwide. 92.79% of respondents to a PWDA survey were concerned that Foundational Supports would not be equally accessible to people with disability regardless of a person's location or background. We cannot afford a 'postcode lottery' for essential disability supports.

Most importantly, Foundational Supports must be designed and implemented in genuine co-design with people with disability and their representative organisations. A system that works for us must be built with us.

The next Federal Government must:

- Implement a nationally consistent Foundational Supports framework with clear oversight to ensure equity in access.
- Expand services in regional and remote areas and to marginalised communities, including LGBTQIA+ people with disability, to eliminate inequities and the 'postcode lottery.'
- Protect against service gaps caused by shifting NDIS eligibility criteria.
- Guarantee genuine co-design and leadership by people with disability and their representative organisations in the development, implementation and ongoing governance of Foundational Supports.

Benefits:

Properly funded Foundational Supports will reduce reliance on hospitals, crisis and community services and close current service gaps that leave many people with disability struggling to access the support they need, including the nearly 5 million Australians with disability not eligible for the NDIS.

When designed and delivered in genuine partnership with people with disability, Foundational Supports will improve our quality of life, uphold our rights and promote our full participation in the community—regardless of NDIS eligibility.

A strong, well-funded Foundational Supports system is not just good policy—it's a vital investment in a more inclusive Australia.



3. Raise the Rate of Income Support Payments

No one should have to choose between food, medication or a roof over their head. Yet for many Australians with disability, this is a daily reality.

In 2018, 38% of Australians living in poverty had a disability. Today, income support payments remain well below the poverty line, leaving thousands in financial hardship.

A single person on the Disability Support Pension (DSP) receives just \$1,047.10 a fortnight—only \$74.79 per day, far below the Henderson Poverty Line which was \$90.92 per day in September 2024. The situation is even worse for JobSeeker recipients, with the standard single rate sitting at just \$55.57 per day, despite 43% of recipients having a disability.

These payments do not cover the basic cost of living, let alone the extra expenses that come with disability, such as

- Accessible housing
- Assistive technology
- Essential supports
- Healthcare, medical aids and specialist services
- Disability-specific transport and home modifications.

People with disability should not be trapped in poverty due to inadequate income support. Every Australian deserves the dignity of a liveable income. Simple policy changes—such as removing the 30-hour work limit and introducing an additional \$100 per fortnight for single DSP recipients—could reduce the proportion of DSP recipients

living below the poverty line from 17.8% to 9.7% and significantly improve financial security. That's why we need the next Federal Government to raise the rate of income support payments.

The next Federal Government must:

- Raise base rates of Jobseeker and other income support payments by at least \$82 per day so they sit above the Henderson Poverty Line.
- Ensure people with disability can access the Disability Support Pension for life by allowing them to meet the 20-point requirement across multiple impairment tables.
- Adopt Recommendation 9 of the Economic Inclusion Advisory Committee's 2024 Report by removing the 30-hour work limit for DSP recipients. This will enable people with disability, including those with fluctuating or episodic conditions and caring responsibilities, to work when they can—without the risk of losing essential income.
- Increasing Commonwealth Rent Assistance by 60% for people with disability to reflect the higher cost of renting accessible housing near essential services.

Benefits:

Raising the rate of income support payments ensures people with disability can meet their basic needs, participate in the economy and avoid preventable health and housing crises, reducing long-term government expenditure on emergency and crisis services.

4. Make Housing Accessible



Australia’s housing crisis is disproportionately affecting people with disability. Safe, secure and accessible housing is a fundamental human right under Articles 9, 19, and 27 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD). Yet, too many people with disability face housing insecurity, unaffordable rents and a shortage of accessible homes.

The housing market continues to exclude people with disability, leading to higher rates of homelessness and unsafe living conditions. Yet, only 5% of new home builds comply with the voluntary Liveable Housing Guidelines, which have been in place since 2010 and ensures basic accessibility features like step-free access and wider doorways.

Without stable housing, all other rights—such as access to work, education, healthcare and community participation—are compromised.

Over the next 40 years, the number of Australians with a mobility difference due to disability is expected to increase from 3 million to around 5.75 million. Coupled with an ageing population, the demand for accessible housing will only rise. In fact, over 80% of older Australians aged over 55 want to live in their own home as they age.



The next Federal Government must:

- Mandate National Accessibility Standards for all new housing developments, incorporating the National Construction Code’s “Livable Housing Design Silver Standard” across all states and territories.
- Ensure people with disability are prioritised in housing and homelessness policy, with accessible housing as a national standard.
- Develop a targeted action plan for people with disability under the National Housing and Homelessness Plan.
- Increase investment in independent accessible social housing to ensure people with high support needs have appropriate housing options.

Benefits:

Increasing the availability of accessible housing reduces homelessness, supports independent living and lowers long-term government spending on institutionalised care and emergency accommodation for people with disability.

Accessible housing doesn’t just benefit people with disability—it also supports ageing Australians and families, reducing the need for costly modifications because when you build for people with disability you build for everyone.

5. Ensure Disability Representation in Government



More than 5.5 million Australians live with disability, yet we are not represented at the highest levels of government. This must change.

Disability-related issues cut across multiple government portfolios, yet there is no Federal Minister or Department ensuring a whole-of-government approach. This lack of coordination weakens responses, delays action and limits accountability.

People with disability, including LGBTQIA+ people with disability, are active members of communities, workplaces and families across Australia, bringing diverse experiences, insights and expertise. However, our voices are too often ignored in the policies that directly affect our lives. This exclusion leads to fragmented responses, lack of coordination across government departments and policy failures that undermine our rights and inclusion.

At the state and territory level there are Disability Ministers. Establishing a Federal Minister for Disability Inclusion and a dedicated Department of Disability would drive real inclusion across all sectors and ensure disability and carer policy and programs are properly coordinated and implemented.

A Minister for Disability Inclusion, ideally a person with disability, would champion systemic advocacy, policy reform, disability rights and diversity at the highest level of government. A Department of Disability would ensure that disability-related programs, policies and protections are central to government decision-making.

The next Federal Government must:

- Establish a Minister for Disability Inclusion in Federal Cabinet.
- Create a Department of Disability Equality and Inclusion responsible for the disability and carers policies and programs and coordinating responses to disability reform processes including the Disability Royal Commission and NDIS Review.
- Ensure that the Minister is a person with disability, with the department supporting the role also having widespread disability representation.

Benefits:

Having a clear and accountable structure will drive more effective and efficient policy and ensure that people with disability are actively involved in shaping the decisions that impact our lives.

A dedicated Minister and disability portfolio in government will deliver a stronger, more coordinated and accountable approach to disability-related policy and decision-making.



6. Protect the human rights of all people with disability



Australia has signed up to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), but we are not seeing these rights being translated into Australian law and policy. Existing human rights frameworks are failing to prevent and address violence, abuse, neglect and exploitation of people with disability as documented extensively in the Disability Royal Commission's Final Report.

People with disability's rights must be embedded in legislation, because when our rights are breached, too often, there are no consequences. This means there is no deterrent for those who infringe on our rights, and no access to remedies to address the harm caused. Urgent legal reforms are needed, and support for such reform is high among our community with 72% of surveyed PWDA members wanting better laws that protect and enforce the human rights of all people with disability, including LGBTQIA+ people with disability.

Alongside these reforms, it is critical that people with disability have systemic representation and independent individual support, through fully funded systemic and individual advocacy services, to uphold our rights and access to justice and remedies.

The next Federal Government must:

- Develop a Human Rights Framework and Human Rights Act reflective of the Australian Human Rights Commission Free and Equal framework.
- In doing so, give due consideration to the Disability Royal Commission's proposed Disability Rights Act (Recommendations 4.1–4.21) to ensure strong and enforceable protections.
- Prioritise the reform and modernisation of the Disability Discrimination Act 1992.
- Ensure all legislative changes comply with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) to which Australia is a signatory.
- Conduct reforms in genuine co-design with people with disability and their representative organisations.
- Provide appropriate funding to disability representative organisations to deliver systemic and individual advocacy services.

Benefits:

By strengthening and enforcing the human rights of all people with disability, we can ensure that no one is left behind.

By implementing PWDA's asks, the next Federal Government can help prevent the recurrence of the systemic failures exposed by the Disability Royal Commission, ensuring the safety and dignity of people with disability, and the same access to protections and justice as all Australians.

7. Protect Disability Representation and Diversity in the Public Sector



Employment rates for people with disability have remained stagnant for decades. Just 60.5% of people with disability aged 15 to 64 participate in the labour force, compared to 84.9% of people without disability. The Disability Royal Commission exposed the harsh structural and attitudinal barriers that prevent people with disability from securing and retaining employment—particularly within the public sector, which should reflect the full diversity of the Australian community.

Disability representation remains critically low across our federal public service, especially at senior levels. The 2020 Australian Public Service (APS) Employee Census found 8.5% of APS employees identified as having a disability - this falls well below the nearly 20% prevalence of disability in the broader population. Furthermore, people with disability are significantly underrepresented in executive-level positions, limiting opportunities for disability leadership and decision-making.

As the largest employer in Australia, the public sector must lead by example in employing people with disability. Public service work directly and indirectly impacts the lives of people with disability, making it crucial that this work is informed by lived experience. When people with disability are empowered as decision-makers, policies and services are more efficient, effective, responsive and inclusive.

The next Federal Government must set and achieve more ambitious targets for disability employment across all levels of the APS, including at executive and leadership levels.

However, achieving these targets requires the protection and expansion of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) programs. These programs are essential for attracting, retaining and advancing people with disability in the workforce. They also promote a culture of diversity and inclusion, leading to better policy outcomes, stronger workforce engagement and improved public trust.

The next Federal Government must:

- Commit to and achieve a more ambitious target than the current 7% for disability employment at all levels, including executive roles, across the APS. This will ensure the public service meets its obligations under the Public Service Act to recognise the diversity of the Australian community and foster diversity in the workplace.
- Retain and protect public sector Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) programs.

Benefits:

Increased disability representation in government and the public sector will help close the employment gap for people with disability.

A more diverse workforce strengthens policy development and service delivery, ensuring government programs better meet the needs of all Australians, including people with disability.

An inclusive public sector sets the standard for private sector employers leading to improvements in employment and workforce participation for people with disability.

PWDA's Federal Election Platform has been shaped by the voices and insights of PWDA's national membership and consultation with the broader disability community.

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