

**18 December 2025**

NSW Government  
NSW Treasury

Submitted via 'Have your say' web page: <https://www.haveyoursay.nsw.gov.au/2026-27-pre-budget-submission>

Dear NSW Treasury

## **People with Disability Australia (PWDA)**

### **2026-27 NSW Pre Budget Submission**

#### **About PWDA**

People with Disability Australia (PWDA) welcomes this opportunity to provide comment on the NSW 2026-27 Budget.

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.

Our work is grounded in a human rights framework that recognises the United Nations ***Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities*** (CRPD) and related mechanisms as fundamental tools for advancing the rights of people with disability.

We are a Disability Representative Organisation (DRO), receiving part of our funding through the Department of Social Services DRO program. We are also a Disabled Peoples Organization (DPO). We are run by people with disability. Many of our staff have disability.

We receive funding to provide cross-disability individual and systemic advocacy on behalf of people with disability in NSW under the NSW Department of Communities and Justice's *Disability Advocacy Futures Program*.

People with disability continue to experience discrimination and poorer life outcomes across all life domains when compared with those without disability. 2022 data shows 5.5 million Australians have a disability, around 21.4% of the population. This is an increase from 17.7% in 2018. In NSW, the most recent 2018 data shows 16.9% of the population have a disability, equivalent to 1,346,200 residents.

## **Five key areas of concern for people with disability the 2026-27 NSW Budget should consider:**

1. Emergency Management
2. Health
3. Housing
4. Foundational Supports and Thriving Kids
5. Education

# 1. Emergency Management

The NSW Government should make disaster and emergency management preparedness more inclusive by investing in:

- I. Establishing a voluntary register so people with disability can identify their locations and emergency services can contact them as part of response planning in disasters and emergencies.
- II. Mapping the areas of NSW that lack accessible public transport to assist evacuation in disasters and emergencies and addressing those deficits urgently.
- III. Mapping the accessibility of emergency management shelters and establishing a funding process so they can be upgraded to become accessible.
- IV. Implementing energy resilience measures for people with disability and elders who need them to shelter in place or evacuate.
- V. Planning for an evacuation workforce.

Currently it is not possible for combat agencies involved in responding to disasters and emergencies to know where people with disability are, or what any of their needs are, to assist with safe evacuation or preparation for disasters and emergencies. The NSW Government needs to invest in setting up a voluntary register for people to identify where they are and what they need.

People in many parts of NSW do not have access to suitable, accessible public transport, wheelchair accessible taxis are few and far between, and current funding restrictions mean community transport cannot be used to evacuate people. This means that people with disability and many elders cannot evacuate ahead of a disaster.

It is difficult for people with disability and their families to identify or plan to use shelters, when they cannot learn in advance which ones are accessible. Councils in areas that have been subjected to repeated fires and floods often lack the funding to upgrade these facilities, and a plan needs to be developed to ensure all these shelters are upgraded to be as accessible as possible.

Plans also need to reflect the fact that people with disability and elders generally share their supports with others, and if a carer evacuates one client to an emergency shelter, they will need to leave to assist others, or to evacuate their own family.

People with disability may depend on assistive technology to communicate, mobilise and perform essential daily tasks. People with disability and elders may depend on connectivity for fall alert, or other medical technology, and they may need refrigeration to keep essential medications cool. Currently the only customers prioritised for the secure energy supply are those who use life-saving medical devices at home. The criteria need to be expanded to encompass this wider set of needs.

Disasters and emergencies have become more frequent, intense, and overlapping in Australia. Cost-of-living pressures make it harder for people to afford to volunteer for the SES or Rural Fire Service. Many individuals lack the personal resources to fend in an emergency, or to take others with them. Even communities well-served by volunteers lack the equipment or vehicles necessary to evacuate elders and people with disability if flood waters rise rapidly or an intense fire front is approaching. NSW needs to plan for a workforce like the one successfully enacted ahead of the 2025 Californian wildfires.

## 2. Health

The NSW Government should invest in making preventative healthcare accessible for all people with disability. This requires investment in mapping the availability of accessible and affordable care, and a targeted plan to address inequity.

PWDA conducted [research](#) and identified a range of barriers people with disability face to accessing healthcare. These included: cost, availability, transport, communication and a lack of access to essential supports. People with disability die decades earlier than non-disabled people, and a lack of access to preventive healthcare is a significant contributor to this.

Skin checks, vaccination, cervical screening, cardiovascular checks, smoking cessation assistance, diabetes screening, prostate checks, bowel screen, sexual health checks- all these measures help NSW people live longer, healthier lives, with greater wellbeing. When these services are inaccessible to people with disability, whether due to physical inaccessibility, long distances, communication barriers, cost barriers, a lack of accessible transport, or other barriers, people with disability risk learning too late of a serious health problem.

Failing to invest in preventive care also increases the likelihood that a person will need a hospital stay. People with disability who live in rural and regional NSW, those who have low incomes, who are from a CALD background or who are First Nations can face additional obstacles.

NSW needs to invest in working with people with disability to identify and map healthcare barriers, to co-design a plan to address them, and to invest in its delivery.

### 3. Housing

We are supportive of the NSW Government's commitment to ensure that all social housing is built to at least the National Construction Code's (NCC) minimum accessibility standard, and that the designs available via the office of the architect also meet this standard.

However, we submit again that the NSW Government should formally sign up to the NCC at no cost to government, so that *all* new homes will be built to this standard.

### 4. Foundational Supports and Thriving Kids

PWDA is concerned about the ongoing lack of clarity around Foundational Supports (and its sub targeted program Thriving Kids), including its funding, scope, and participation rate expectations. While we acknowledge there are negotiations between the Commonwealth and the states and territories, PWDA submits that the NSW government must:

- I. Ensure the 2026-27 NSW Budget reflects adequate resourcing for general and targeted Foundational Supports and Thriving Kids as the NDIS New Framework Planning is beginning in mid-2026.
- II. Ensure that Foundational Supports are designed and delivered in a way which is responsive to the needs of people with disability in NSW and maximises equitable access. This means that people with disability and their representatives must continue to be part of the design and delivery of Foundational Supports through an ongoing co-design process and be part of any evaluation process.
- III. Continue to fund existing evidence-based programs and services provided for people with disability in NSW.
- IV. Provide a clear estimation of the expected participation levels for Foundational supports in NSW, including for general and targeted Foundational Supports.

- V. Provide a clear estimation of required funding based on accurate modelling.

## 5. Education

PWDA notes that while there have been some encouraging movements towards promoting more inclusive education in NSW public schools (and we note that the NSW Government has not adopted the serious and harmful regressive steps such as taken in Queensland with the expansion of its segregated system), more needs to be done to meet our obligations under the **United Nations Conventions on the Rights of Persons with Disability** (CRPD). Article 24 of the CRPD states that all students with disability have a right to a fully inclusive education. In the 2026-27 NSW Budget PWDA is seeking government funding commitments to:

- I. Increasing individualised/personalised in class learning support for all students with disability to ensure students with disability are not denied learning opportunities, including through using unnecessary Individual Behaviour Support Plans or Behaviour Response Plans which involve restrictive practices. Specific actions include:
  - a. Making **Integration Funding Support** (IFS) more readily available and for longer periods.
  - b. Ensuring ongoing training and support for classroom teachers to assist them in developing, implementing, evaluating, and co-reviewing high quality, collaborative, **Individual Learning Plans** (ILP). It is critical that objectives and teaching strategies are achievable and *monitored* to prevent escalation to behaviour related interventions, including restrictive practices, because of a lack of adjustments and review.

- c. Increasing recruitment and retention of **School Learning Support Officers** (SLSO) and supporting their ongoing professional development, including through providing financial assistance for qualifications upgrades.
- II. Increase funding for advocacy organisations working to support students with disability and their parents and carers in navigating the education space including with reviewing Individual Learning Plans and Behaviour Support Plans. There is significant ongoing unmet need regarding advocacy services in NSW.
- III. Continuing to fund the NSW Department of Education so that it can maintain secretariat capacity for the NSW Department of Education Disability Strategy Reference Group, and other NSW Department of Education and associated agency forums focused on engaging with the disability community.
- IV. Implementing, after meaningful consultation with students with disability, their parents and carers, and their representative organisations, best practice disability-affirming evidence-based programs to support students with disability transitions from school to open employment and/or further study and training. Funding should be made available for pilot programs (which include a robust evaluative element).
- V. Allocating funds for the undertaking of a formal audit and review of all existing complaints processes and procedures available to students with disability and their parents and carers to ensure they meet the needs of students with disability in NSW and their parents and carers. The Terms of Reference for this audit and review and evaluation must be done in collaboration and consultation with students with disability, their parents and carers, and their representative organisations.
- VI. Not building any further segregated schools in NSW or supporting other parties building them.



- VII. Fund ongoing professional development and professional peer support opportunities for classroom teachers working with students with disability in NSW public schools, especially for teachers working in regional, rural and remote locations, and in other locations which may be identified as experiencing other marginalisation or disadvantage.
- VIII. Fund specific evidence-based training for NSW teaching staff on how to approach and use behavior support plans and restrictive practices in NSW schools in a way that minimises harm and disruption to learning, reduces the use of restrictive practices, and is consistent with upholding the human rights of the student with disability. A key focus of teacher training and behaviour support plans must be on proactively identifying and reducing triggers for behaviours, rather than reacting to a behaviour after it has occurred.

Yours sincerely



**Megan Spindler-Smith**

**Acting CEO**

**People with Disability Australia**