

# CYDA Pre-budget submission 2024-25

Sustainable Futures: Charting a Path to Inclusion for Children and Young People with Disability in the 2024-25 Federal Budget

*“Please invest in my child. Invest in her inclusion and her potential.”*

Parent of a child with disability, 12 years old, January 2024

January 2024



Children and Young People  
with Disability Australia



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**A note on terminology:**

*Term being used:*

*Children and young people with disability*

The disability community has largely recognised and used inclusive language and terminology for decades. Children and Young People with Disability Australia (CYDA) uses person-first language, e.g., person with disability. However, CYDA recognises many people with disability choose to use identity-first language, e.g., disabled person.

**Acknowledgements:**

Children and Young People with Disability Australia would like to acknowledge the traditional custodians of the lands on which this report has been written, reviewed and produced, whose cultures and customs have nurtured and continue to nurture this land since the Dreamtime. We pay our respects to their Elders past and present. This is, was, and always will be First Nations land.

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## Summary of recommendations

### **Recommendation 1: Starting together, staying together: Prioritising investment in the transformation to a truly Inclusive Education model by;**

- Supporting an holistic, integrated and co-ordinated approach by funding recommendations from key disability reforms relating to inclusive education including; (Refer to key Reform areas list in Table 1).
- Building an effective workforce that supports inclusion.
- Prioritising investment in Inclusive Education by phasing out segregated education.
- Establishing/funding an independent oversight body to ensure that all levels of education providers are meeting their statutory and legal obligations for inclusion.

### **Recommendation 2: NDIS Review new early childhood pathway recommendations**

- Invest in co-designing NDIS Review recommendations and using the expertise of the disability representative organisations.
- Funding to develop and implement a Foundational Supports Strategy.
- Invest in recruiting, training and retaining a workforce that is responsive the needs of children and young people with disability and delivers quality supports.
- Resource and fund a specific NDIS pathway for young people with disability.
- Examine how NDIS is attracting, recruiting, and retaining young people with disability in its workforce.

### **Recommendation 3: Investing in the voices of children and young people with disability.**

- Involve and engage children and young people with disability across all government portfolios impacting their lives by;
  - Funding and implementing a National Children and Young People with Disability Engagement Framework for genuine inclusion, built on co-design principles.
  - Investing in the development and implementation of the Framework in partnership with young people with disability and Disability Representative Organisations, including CYDA.

### **Recommendation 4: Boost funding for systemic and individual advocacy for children and young people with disability for better outcomes.**

- Boost funding for systemic, individual, and local community-based advocacy to ensure the rights of children and young people with disability in Australia are upheld in line with the CRPD.
- Fund a specialist individual disability advocacy service for children and young people with disability.

### **Recommendation 5: Urgent need to address cost of living crisis.**

- Address cost of living **now** so that there is a sustainable future for children and Young People with disability.
- Review and amend the social security system to ensure that young people with disability are not living in poverty and are adequately supported to find and maintain meaningful employment. This includes;
  - Increasing the rate of payments to a dignified standard of living that factor in the extra living costs that are associated with living with disability
  - Amending the DSP requirements to support recipients to engage in paid employment
  - Ensuring timely and appropriate support for young people to secure income support.

## Introduction

Children and Young People with Disability Australia (CYDA) is the national representative organisation for children and young people with disability aged 0 to 25 years. CYDA has an extensive national membership of more than 5,000 young people with disability, families and caregivers of children with disability, and advocacy and community organisations.

Our vision is that children and young people with disability are valued and living empowered lives with equality of opportunity; and our purpose is to ensure governments, communities, and families, are empowering children and young people with disability to fully exercise their rights and aspirations. We do this by:

- Driving inclusion
- Creating equitable life pathways and opportunities
- Leading change in community attitudes and aspirations
- Supporting young people to take control
- Calling out discrimination, abuse, and neglect.

CYDA welcomes the opportunity to make a submission to the 2024–25 Budget. The Australian Government has the power to fund short term initiatives and long-term strategic endeavours that can significantly improve the lives of children and young people with disability. By investing in interventions and strategies to protect and empower this group, the government can support them to thrive, both now and as they move into adulthood.

When children and young people with disability have equal opportunities for quality lifelong learning including education, employment, friendships, and community engagement, it benefits us all—culturally, socially, and economically. CYDA's submission aligns with the government's 2024-25 budget objectives to lay the foundations for a stronger, more inclusive, and sustainable economy.

## Key Area 1 – Inclusive Education

### **Starting together, staying together: Prioritising investment in the transformation to a truly Inclusive Education model**

Australia's current education system does not adequately support the learning and full inclusion of children and young people with disability. Segregation of students with disability in 'special' schools and classes continues, despite compelling evidence that inclusion in mainstream educational settings costs less and leads to improved short and long-term outcomes for all students<sup>1</sup>. Investing in inclusive education is a better economic choice compared to exclusionary strategies, which deny learners with disability their right to quality education and drive-up overall education expenses.

Any investment in education must align with Australia's Disability Strategy (ADS) 2021-2031<sup>2</sup>. This strategy, a nationally agreed commitment to realising the Convention on the Rights of Children with Disability (CRPD), specifically emphasises Priority 2—Education and Learning,

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<sup>1</sup> Mezzanotte, C. (2022), "The social and economic rationale of inclusive education: An overview of the outcomes in education for diverse groups of students", *OECD Education Working Papers*, No. 263, <https://doi.org/10.1787/bff7a85d-en>.

<sup>2</sup> [Australia's Disability Strategy 2021- 2031](#)

which focuses on building capability in delivering inclusive education to enhance educational outcomes for learners with disability.

### **Starting together: Invest in Inclusive Early Childhood Development**

CYDA supports the government's objective to “lay the foundations for a stronger, more inclusive, and sustainable economy”. We believe, and the research supports, that prioritising inclusive education right from the start of a child’s life creates a pathway to greater economic and social independence in the future. Increasing evidence indicates that allocating resources to early childhood education and care can significantly enhance both the cognitive and social development of children. In light of this growing body of evidence, governments at both national and international levels have actively pursued investments in early childhood education and care to boost the capabilities of their populations and tackle inequalities<sup>3</sup>.

We therefore urge the government to prioritise investment in the 650,000<sup>4</sup> Australian children and young people with disability aged 0-24 by funding a coordinated approach to address the significant Education reforms, including the final report from the Disability Royal Commission, Australia’s Disability Strategy, upcoming changes to legislative frameworks and other inquiries and reviews. (See Table 1, below)

**Table 1 –Disability Reforms Related to Education**

<b>Reform Area</b>	<b>Detail</b>	<b>Recommendations for Budget 2024-25</b>
<a href="#">Draft National vision for Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC)</a>	Outlines a vision in which every child can access and participate in high-quality, culturally responsive ECEC	Create a specific ECEC fund to cover Early childhood providers’ access and inclusion costs and deploy trained educators nationwide to offer guidance on these supports.
<a href="#">Australian Disability Strategy (ADS) - The Early Childhood Targeted Action Plan</a>	Targets infants to school-age children, providing information and support for families.	Strengthen the capability and capacity of key services and systems to support parents and carers to make informed choices about their child.
<a href="#">The (draft) Early Years Strategy</a>	To shape a vision for the future of Australia’s children and their families.	Fund genuine co-design approaches to develop and test all elements of The Strategy’s design
<a href="#">Inclusion Support program (ISP) Review (2023)</a>	Australian Government’s primary inclusion funding program for ECEC services.	Implement recommendations from The Review, ensuring inclusive and accessible before and after-school care for primary school students. This supports families in managing work, caregiving, and educational needs.
<a href="#">Disability Royal Commission</a>	Recommendations related to Inclusive Education and segregation	Prioritise investment in inclusive education by phasing out segregated education.
<a href="#">National Schools Reform Agreement (NSRA)</a>	Joint agreement between Commonwealth, states, and territories, aiming to boost student outcomes.	Ensure the NSRA incentivises inclusive education, by holding states and territories accountable to spearhead the delivery of full inclusion of all students in mainstream school settings.
<a href="#">National Teacher Workforce Action Plan</a>	Improve initial teacher education (ITE) to boost graduation rates and ensure graduating teachers are better prepared for the classroom.	Invest in strengthening ITE programs to deliver effective beginning teachers and responsive teaching to support diverse learners.

<sup>3</sup> Dickinson, H., Smith, C., Yates, S., Faulkner, A. (2022) Taking the first step in an inclusive life – experiences of Australian early childhood education and care. Report prepared for Children and Young People with Disability Australia (CYDA)

<sup>4</sup> [People with disability in Australia, Prevalence of disability \(2018\) - Australian Institute of Health and Welfare \(aihw.gov.au\)](#)

**Staying together:** Ensure the Commonwealth’s Education and School Programmes support and incentivise inclusive education.

The current education system does not adequately support teachers to plan and develop adjustments as required under the Disability Standards for Education<sup>5</sup>.

Achieving greater inclusivity in schools to enable learners with disability throughout Australia to learn alongside their non-disabled peers, necessitates an approach that universally enhances capacity while incorporating specialist expertise where required. The research suggests a balanced approach involving both specialisation and universal capacity building.

Overemphasising specialisation may hinder educators from recognising inclusion as their shared responsibility. Australian classrooms should be effectively equipped to allow students with disability to stay together and learn alongside their non disabled peers by investing in training the workforce so that they can become equipped to serve as agents for inclusion<sup>6</sup>.

CYDA also recommends the government to establish and fund an independent oversight body to ensure that all levels of education providers are meeting their statutory and legal obligations for inclusion.

### **Recommendation – Key Area 1 – Inclusive Education**

#### **Resource and invest in inclusive education by;**

- Supporting a holistic, integrated and co-ordinated approach by funding recommendations from key disability reforms relating to inclusive education including; (Refer to key Reform areas list in Table 1).
- Building an effective workforce that supports inclusion.
- Prioritising investment in Inclusive Education by phasing out segregated education.
- Establishing/funding an independent oversight body to ensure that all levels of education providers are meeting their statutory and legal obligations for inclusion.

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<sup>5</sup> [The Disability Standards for Education](#)

<sup>6</sup> Deloitte Access Economics, *Inclusion in early childhood care and education in high-income countries*. Report prepared for the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (2021) <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000378761>

## Key Area 2 – NDIS Review Implementation: Resource Recommendations for Early Childhood Pathway

With 57% of NDIS participants aged 25 and under, and one in two being children, the Independent Review of the NDIS highlights crucial changes to the Early Childhood Approach and Foundational Supports. In 2019, research revealed that delayed interventions beyond early childhood incurred an annual cost of over \$15 billion for governments, equating to \$2,000 per child nationwide<sup>7</sup>.

To optimise these reforms and ensure the scheme's sustainability, we urge the government to:

- Invest in co-developing, testing, and implementing the proposed Early Childhood Pathway<sup>8</sup>, by involving children and young people with disability. This aligns with the "Nothing without us" principle and promotes meaningful engagement with Disability Representative Organisations (DROs).
- Prioritise investment in the Foundational Supports Strategy<sup>9</sup>, utilising genuine co-design approaches and input from young people with disability.
- Fund a youth-specific NDIS framework for ages 9-25 to enhance service consistency and improvement to address the gap in tailored supports for this group who represent 42% of scheme participants<sup>10</sup>.
- Invest in recruiting, training, and retaining a responsive workforce for quality early intervention services, aligned with National Guidelines and ECIA Best Practice Principles<sup>11</sup>.
- Employ people with lived experience across the NDIS system, including proposed Navigators and Lead practitioners, with a minimum quota for all participant-facing roles. The NDIS should also examine how it is attracting, recruiting and retaining young people with disability in its workforce.
- Provide comprehensive training and support for NDIS staff, Navigators, Lead practitioners, educators, teachers, and related professionals involved in supporting children and young people with disability. Investing in these areas will not only support timely interventions for children with developmental concerns as outlined in the NDIS Review but also contribute to a more inclusive and prosperous society, promoting economic growth and reducing long-term healthcare burdens<sup>12 13</sup>.

### Recommendation – Key Area 2 - NDIS Review EC pathway recommendations.

- Invest in co-designing NDIS Review recommendations and using the expertise of the disability representative organisations.
- Fund the development and implementation of a Foundational Supports Strategy.
- Invest in recruiting, training and retaining a workforce that is responsive the needs of children and young people with disability and delivers quality supports.
- Resource and fund a specific NDIS pathway for young people with disability.
- Examine how NDIS is attracting, recruiting and retaining young people with disability in its workforce.

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<sup>7</sup> CoLab (2019). [How Australia can invest in children and return more - \(thefrontproject.org.au\)](https://thefrontproject.org.au)

<sup>8</sup> NDIS review. (2023) [A new connected system of support and new early intervention NDIS pathway | NDIS Review](#)

<sup>9</sup> NDIS Review (2023). [Working together to deliver the NDIS. NDIS Review: Final Report](#)

<sup>10</sup> As at March 2023; NDIA. (2023). <https://data.ndis.gov.au/explore-data>

<sup>11</sup> ECIA Best Practice Principles. <https://www.eciavic.org.au/documents/item/1419>

<sup>12</sup> The Royal Australasian College of Physicians (2013). [Early Intervention for Children with a Developmental Disability](#)

<sup>13</sup> Centre for Community Child Health (2011). [DEECD Early Childhood Intervention Reform Project: Revised Literature Review.](#)



## Key Area 3 – Invest in the Voices of children and young people via Inclusive Engagement Across Government Portfolios

Children and young people with disability in Australia have the right to express their views, as stated in the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disability (CPRD), Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), ADS, *Disability Discrimination Act 1992* (Cth), various State Disability Acts, and the Disability Standards for Education (2005). However, there are limited mechanisms to enforce these rights. As a consequence, this group is frequently neglected in the formulation of policies and services, putting their rights at risk of marginalisation.<sup>14</sup> Participation in consultative activities is often hindered by inaccessible processes, and current government engagement mechanisms are not appealing or accessible to them, as highlighted in the 2019 report on engagement with the ADS.<sup>15</sup>

To ensure policy reflects the needs of children and young people with disability, governments should meaningfully engage them and their caregivers in policy development, through the genuine use of co-design principles.<sup>16</sup> Despite possessing relevant expertise, DROs are frequently underutilised in community engagement efforts. This underutilisation poses a risk of governments delivering sessions that are less meaningful, accessible, or inclusive. The 2023 Review of the NDIS showcases good practice by consistently engaging with these organisations for meaningful involvement—a model that should be consistently applied.

CYDA recommends funding and implementing a National Children and Young People with Disability Engagement Framework for genuine inclusion, built on co-design principles.<sup>17</sup> The Framework should be used to input into the ADS and other policies and systems that intersect with the children and young people with disability across multiple portfolios. This framework needs to be developed and implemented in partnership with young people with disability and DROs, including CYDA, the only national representative organisation focusing solely on the rights and needs of children and young people with disability aged 0-25.

### Recommendation – Key Area 3 – Investing in their voices

Involve and engage children and young people with disability across all government portfolios impacting their lives by;

- Funding and implementing a National Children and Young People with Disability Engagement Framework for genuine inclusion, built on co-design principles.
- Invest in the development and implementation of the Framework in partnership with young people with disability and Disability Representative Organisations, including CYDA.

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<sup>14</sup> Gerison Lansdown, 'Children with Disabilities: Chapter 6' In *Human Rights and Disability Advocacy*, Maya Sabatello and Marianne Schulze (eds), (University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013).

<sup>15</sup> Social Deck. (2019). [Right to opportunity: Consultation report to help shape the next national disability strategy](#), p. 64

<sup>16</sup> Purple Orange. (2021) [Guide to Co-Design with people living with disability](#).

<sup>17</sup> *ibid.*

## Key Area 4 - Boost funding for systemic and individual advocacy for children and young people with disability for better outcomes

Systemic advocacy conducted by human-rights based DROs, like CYDA, work towards reform and change of social systems and structures that discriminate against, or contribute to, the abuse and neglect of people with disability. The systemic issues affecting the rights of children and young people with disability are extremely broad, spanning a large range of government portfolios and topic areas including child protection, health, education, employment, the NDIS, quality and safeguarding, to name a few. This means that children and young people's voices need to be heard through participatory processes across a wide range of policy areas, facilitated by their national representative organisation.

Investing in individual and systemic advocacy for children and young people with disability is also important for several reasons. Firstly, it can help to ensure that the voices of children and young people with disability are heard and that their rights are protected. Secondly, it can help to create a more inclusive society by promoting the participation of children and young people with disability in all aspects of life. Thirdly, it can help to identify and address systemic barriers that prevent this cohort from accessing services and participating fully in society. Fourthly, it can help to improve outcomes for children and young people with disability by ensuring that they receive the support they need to reach their full potential.

Currently, the National Disability Advocacy Program (NDAP), funded by the Australian Department of Social Services, is the primary source of funding for individual disability advocacy. However, there's a critical shortage of advocacy services, especially for children and young people with disability. To uphold their rights in line with the CRPD, a boost in funding for systemic, individual, and local community-based advocacy supports is pivotal. Funding increases should have regards to the National Disability Advocacy Framework<sup>18</sup> and the Disability Advocacy Work plan. Research indicates that every \$1 invested in advocacy supports yields a \$3.50 return by diverting issues from other government services.<sup>19</sup> While this cost-benefit analysis examined individual advocacy for people with disability across the life course, it is reasonable to assume the return would be greater when investing in advocacy services for children and young people with disability given the evidence around early intervention and the importance of development opportunities in the 0-25 year period for late life outcomes.

### Recommendation – Key Area 4 – Individual and systemic advocacy

- Boost funding for systemic, individual and local community based advocacy to ensure the rights of children and young people with disability in Australia are upheld in line with the CRPD.
- Fund a specialist individual disability advocacy service for children and young people with disability.

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<sup>18</sup> [National Disability Advocacy Framework 2023 - 2025 | Department of Social Services, Australian Government \(dss.gov.au\)](#)

<sup>19</sup> Disability Advocacy Network Australia (2017). [A Cost Benefit Analysis of Australian independent disability advocacy agencies.](#)

## Key Area 5 – Urgent need to address cost of living crisis.

CYDA emphasises the urgent need to tackle the cost of living crisis for those with disability, particularly children and young people. Addressing this issue is crucial for ensuring a sustainable future. The statistics reveal alarming circumstances for this cohort:

- 1 in 6 children live in poverty in Australian society<sup>20</sup>.
- People with disability are more likely to experience poverty, face lower employment rates, and higher social isolation<sup>21</sup>.
- Young people with disability are over three times more likely to be unemployed than older adults with disability (24.7% compared to 7.9%)<sup>22</sup>.
- Poor education and employment outcomes are indicators of the risk of falling below the poverty line.<sup>23</sup>
- A staggering 49% of young people aged 15 to 24 with disability rely on income support payments, highlighting a stark contrast to the 14% of their counterparts without disability.<sup>24</sup>

To address these challenges, CYDA calls on the government to invest in aligning strategies that support young people with disability as they transition beyond school—ADS focuses on "Employment and Financial Security," aiming to improve the transition from education to employment and strengthen financial independence for people with disability. Various national strategies and plans are in place or development: [Youth Strategy](#), [Disability Employment Strategy](#), [Disability Employment Centre of Excellence](#), [Children's Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy](#), [Action Plan for The Health Of Children and Young People](#), [Career Education Strategy](#), [National Skills Strategies](#), [NDIS Participant Employment Strategy](#), [Youth Financial Capability Campaign](#), [Wellbeing Framework](#), [Housing And Homelessness Plan](#), and [National Education Strategy](#).

For a comprehensive impact, it is essential that these strategies are aligned, adequately funded, and support accessible and inclusive initiatives. This approach will enable all young people with disability to participate in further study, employment, independent living, and travel, fostering their overall independence.

### Recommendation – Key Area 5 – Urgent need to address cost of living crisis

The government should;

- Address cost of living **now** so that there is a sustainable future for children and Young People with disability.
- Review and amend the social security system to ensure that young people with disability are not living in poverty and are adequately supported to find and maintain meaningful employment. This includes;
  - Increasing the rate of payments to a dignified standard of living that factor in the extra living costs that are associated with living with disability
  - Amending the DSP requirements to support recipients to engage in paid employment
  - Ensuring timely and appropriate support for young people to secure income support.

<sup>20</sup> Brotherhood of St Laurence (2020) 'Poverty in Australia', <https://www.bsl.org.au/bsl-drives-change/poverty-in-australia/>.

<sup>21</sup> Compassion (2020) '[Why Education is key to breaking the cycle of poverty](#)'.

<sup>22</sup> Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (2022) [People with disability in Australia -Unemployment](#)

<sup>23</sup> Compassion (2020) '[Why Education is key to breaking the cycle of poverty](#)'.

<sup>24</sup> AIHW. (2019). [People with disability in Australia 2019: in brief \(Full publication;21Aug2019Edition\)\(AIHW\)](#)

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