

# ***The first step of an inclusive life for children with a disability***

## **CYDA's submission on the *Draft National ECEC Vision***

**Children and Young People with Disability Australia (CYDA)**

**April 2023**

**Authorised by:**

Skye Kakoschke-Moore, Chief Executive Officer

**Contact details:**

Children and Young People with Disability Australia

E. [skye@cyda.org.au](mailto:skye@cyda.org.au)

P. 03 9417 1025

W. [www.cyda.org.au](http://www.cyda.org.au)

**Author:**

Sue Tape, Project Coordinator – Inclusive Education

**Reviewer:**

Dr Liz Hudson, Policy and Research Manager

**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, present and future. This is, was and always will be Aboriginal land.

We would also like to acknowledge the important contributions of our community to our work. This platform draws on the insights and lived expertise of young people and families/caregivers who participated in our work.

**A note on terminology:***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.

*Families and caregivers*

CYDA refers to children and young people with disability and their families and caregivers. We use the term 'families' as recognition of the different structures and arrangements and 'caregivers' to acknowledge not all children live in family environments. For the purposes of this submission, CYDA are referencing the experiences of children and young people with disability who are cared for by their families and caregivers.

*Early childhood education and care (ECEC)*

- [Approved education and care services](#) and the National Quality Standards
- [Preschool or kindergarten](#) in each state or territory
- [Early Childhood Australia's Factsheet](#) on education and care

## Contents

Recommendations.....	3
Introduction.....	4
CYDA's role in advocating in the early childhood sector.....	4
CYDA's feedback on the draft ' <i>National Vision for Early Childhood Education and Care</i> '.....	5
Area of the draft vision .....	5
CYDA's feedback .....	5
CYDA's vision of early childhood for children with disability .....	16
Challenges with delivering on the early childhood vision.....	17
Challenges to be addressed.....	17
Areas for reform .....	17
Levers for change .....	17
Experiences of early childhood education and care .....	18
CYDA's ECEC Survey 2022.....	18
The Early Learning Monitor 2022 .....	18
Further information and resources .....	20

## Recommendations

CYDA is encouraged by the draft ‘*National Vision for Early Childhood Education and Care*’ and welcomes the inclusion of equity and accessibility principles. The recommendations below support the importance of early childhood education and care (ECEC) in the first steps of an inclusive life for young children with disability.

<b>1. Activate our children’s voices</b>	Implement a National Child and Young Person with Disability Engagement Framework	Australia needs to develop and implement a National Child and Young Person with Disability Engagement Framework to amplify the voices of children, across government policy and programs to ensure their rights and developmental and social needs are included. Truly innovative and effective engagement needs to begin with anti-ableism <sup>1</sup> .
<b>2. Support the workforce</b>	Support the current and future workforce across all settings	A qualified, fairly paid and supported workforce is critical to the experience of children with disability and their families in early childhood settings. Collaborative models for professional learning, staff development and career progression must be underpinned by better pay and recognition.
<b>3. Calibrate the funding</b>	Calibrate the funding to ensure revised models and subsidies support children with disability to enrol and attend early childhood education and care	<a href="#">Revised models and subsidies</a> should support children with disability to enrol and attend early childhood education and care regardless of the setting, the <a href="#">Early Childhood Approach/NDIS</a> plan in place and income or work status of the families.  Fund outcomes monitoring for children and young people with disability to improve the available data and outcomes reporting across education.
<b>4. Enhance support and adjustments</b>	Revise the Inclusion Support Program (ISP) to address the inclusion of each child and the capacity and capability of educators	The <a href="#">Inclusion Support Program</a> (ISP) needs to change to support children across all hours they attend settings, to navigate and to address the inclusion of each child, increase the capacity and capability of educators and the transition to a long-term inclusive education for all children and young people with disability.
<b>5. Collaborate</b>	Deliver on the Early Childhood Targeted Action Plan (TAP)	The full range of stakeholders in the ECEC sector and all levels of Government need to collaborate to deliver on <a href="#">Australia’s Disability Strategy 2021-2031</a> including, the <a href="#">Early Childhood Targeted Action Plan</a> (TAP). The TAP lays out key actions to strengthen early identification, information, supports and pathways, and collaboration between programs and services.

<sup>1</sup> Byrne-Haber, C., (2021) Nine steps to being anti-ableist Available at: <https://sheribyrnehaber.medium.com/are-you-ready-to-be-anti-ableist-in-2021-239103637949>

## Introduction

[Children and Young People with Disability Australia](#) (CYDA) is the national peak body which represents children and young people (aged 0-25) with disability. CYDA is a not for profit, community-based organisation with an extensive national membership of over 5,000 young people with disability, families, and caregivers of children with disability, with the majority of our members being families.

CYDA's purpose is to ensure governments, communities and families, are empowering children and young people with disability to fully exercise their rights and aspirations.

CYDA is committed to the following ongoing actions to achieve its purpose:

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

### **CYDA supports the following positions in conjunction with this submission**

- [Position Paper](#) on Segregation
- The Australian Coalition for Inclusive Education's '[Driving change: A roadmap for achieving inclusive education in Australia](#)' (How to make education better - [Easy English version](#))
- Australian Research Alliance for Children and Youth (ARACY)'s [The Nest](#) child wellbeing framework
- Early Childhood Australia's [Statement on the inclusion of every child in early childhood education and care](#) and draft [Statement on Play](#)
- Early Childhood Australia and Early Childhood Intervention Australia's [Position statement on the inclusion of children with a disability in early childhood education and care](#)
- Thrive by Five & The Minderoo Foundation's [Time to Act: Investing in our children and our future](#)
- Play Group Australia's National Advisory Group's [Playgroup Statement 2022](#)

### **CYDA's role in advocating in the early childhood sector**

CYDA's role including systemic advocacy and engagement with community in the early childhood area is underpinned by our other work. CYDA is committed to ensuring that children and young people with disability are afforded equitable opportunities to succeed and we advocate that this cannot be achieved until they feel and are fully included across all systems and community life.

We also acknowledge early experiences of inclusion and exclusion can have consequential impacts on one's life trajectory and as such, children with disability must experience full inclusion from birth.

CYDA grounds our work in a human-rights approach. Children and young people with disability are not and cannot be full members of society unless their rights are upheld. This includes the rights of children and young people with disability to express their views and have these views listened to.

The experiences of children and young people must be captured in data and accounted for in public policy. Too often children and young people with disability's specific needs and strengths are absent from both children and youth-specific and disability-specific policies.

## CYDA's feedback on the draft 'National Vision for Early Childhood Education and Care'

Area of the draft vision	CYDA's feedback
<b>Scope</b>	
<p>This vision encompasses all forms of ECEC including preschool, long day care, family day care and out of school hours care. We recognise all forms as being essential to workforce participation as well as an environment of learning, development, and care both in the early years and during school years. The vision is also intended to intersect with broader early childhood development systems and programs.</p>	<p><i>To what extent do you agree that the draft national ECEC vision scope adequately reflects ECEC?</i></p> <p>CYDA supports this strong position on ECEC and recognises that accessible and inclusive early childhood experiences are one of the surest and most sustainable pathways to an inclusive life and all the benefits that brings to the whole family, including balancing work and care responsibilities.</p> <p>CYDA believes the draft vision also helps support the objectives of The <a href="#">Early Childhood Targeted Action Plan</a> as outlined in <a href="#">Australia's Disability Strategy 2021-2031</a> as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• enable early identification of disability or developmental concerns and develop clearer pathways and timely access to appropriate supports</li> <li>• strengthen the capability and capacity of key services and systems to support parents and caregivers to make informed choices about their child</li> <li>• encourage a stronger sense of inclusion and provide opportunities for parents, caregivers and children to build peer networks, including for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and culturally and linguistically diverse parents and caregivers.</li> </ul> <p>CYDA would encourage the focus on cconnected services. The service systems that relate to early childhood development – including childcare, preschool, child health, family support, the NDIS early childhood approach and child protection – are disconnected.</p> <p>Policy, process and programs for these systems span federal and state/territory governments, and a mix of ministries and departments within governments. This complexity is confusing for families and caregivers to navigate and children risk falling between the gaps of a fragmented system.</p>

Area of the draft vision	CYDA's feedback
<b>Principles</b>	
<p>Equity: All children are supported to succeed, regardless of their circumstances and abilities. Carefully designed strategies and targeted investment provide additional support to children and families when and where they need it.</p>	<p><i>To what extent do you agree that the four key principles outlined are right for the draft national ECEC vision?</i></p> <p>CYDA supports the four key principles and is encouraged to see that the principle 'equity' includes reference to investment and strategies to support all children to succeed.</p> <p>Dependent on the support, engagement and experiences children and their families/caregivers and communities receive during early years, this life stage can bring both opportunity and risk.<sup>2</sup> Tragically, we know that many children are not able to access equitable or adequate support. Specifically, not every child currently has access to high quality, affordable and inclusive Early Childhood Education and Care and Outside School Hours Care. As a result, children assessed as developmentally vulnerable on one or more domains increased from 21.7% in 2018 to 22% in 2021.<sup>3</sup> This is in addition to the children who already have a diagnosed disability.</p>
<p>Affordability: ECEC is within the means of all families. Sustainable, flexible funding systems are in place to support providers in reducing cost barriers for all children and families.</p>	<p>Australia's early learning centres are also some of the most expensive in the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). According to the <i>Household, Income and Labour Dynamics in Australia (HILDA)</i> Survey, approximately 27 per cent of household income is absorbed by childcare.<sup>4</sup> These costs have more than doubled since 2002.<sup>5</sup></p>
<p>Quality: ECEC services are culturally appropriate for their community and meet high standards in providing learning and development outcomes. Children build relationships with a stable, qualified workforce that is recognised for its critical role in the community, and families have</p>	<p>The federal systems that influence and should support key aspects of early childhood development are underperforming and must improve. For instance, our early learning centres are of inconsistent quality.</p> <p>Too many do not meet National Quality Standard (NQS). According to National Quality Framework Snapshot Q4 2022, 10.4 per cent of centres did not</p>

<sup>2</sup> Thrive by Five & The Minderoo Foundation. (2017). *Time to Act: Investing in our children and our future*. Available at [TB5\\_Time2Act\\_20170119\\_FNL\\_Digital-p.pdf \(minderoo.org\)](https://www.minderoo.org/TB5_Time2Act_20170119_FNL_Digital-p.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> Australian Early Development Census .*Australian Early Development Census National Report 2021*. Department of Education and Training. Available at <https://www.aedc.gov.au/resources/detail/2021-aedc-national-report>

<sup>4</sup> Ruppanner, L. (2019). *HILDA findings on Australian families' experience of childcare should be a call-to-arms for government*. Available at [HILDA findings on Australian families' experience of childcare should be a call-to-arms for government \(unimelb.edu.au\)](https://www.unimelb.edu.au/hilda-findings-on-australian-families-experience-of-childcare-should-be-a-call-to-arms-for-government)

<sup>5</sup> *ibid.*



Area of the draft vision	CYDA's feedback
confidence in ECEC services.	meet the NQS, rising to 37.6 per cent for family day care. <sup>6</sup>
<p>Accessibility: Geographic or cultural barriers to attending a high quality ECEC are removed. Services are supported to provide flexible models that meet the needs of their community and link with support services where families need them</p>	<p>The results of CYDA's ECEC Survey 2022 are shared in the report: "Taking the first step in an inclusive life - experiences of Australian early childhood education and care". The report details one in five reported that their child had been refused enrolment, nearly a quarter said their child had been limited in the number of hours they were allowed to attend, nearly 30% reported exclusion from excursions, events or activities, and about the same number reported bullying from other children or staff. These findings suggest that there is an urgent need to better equip and support early childhood education and care settings by removing the barriers to early inclusion and more flexibly support children with disability so that they are included early and are able to benefit from the education and support provided. Without this, we are likely to see the same sorts of inequities perpetuated as in the past.<sup>7</sup></p>
<b>Vision</b>	
<p>*Children: Every child can access and participate in high-quality, culturally responsive ECEC, including preschool, to support their right to thrive, grow their sense of identity and connection to the world, and become confident and engaged learners.</p>	<p><i>To what extent do you support the draft national ECEC vision statements?</i></p> <p>CYDA supports the statements presented. In notes to support the vision, CYDA suggests direct reference to the underlying human rights, policies and legislation. CYDA also wishes to bring light to the need to activate and centre children's voices.</p> <p>The rights of children and young people with disability to express their views, and have these views listened to, are articulated in the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disability (CPRD) and the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), and recognised through a range of legislation and policy in Australia at federal and state levels, including the Disability Discrimination Act (1992), various State Disability Acts, and the Disability</p>

<sup>6</sup> Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority. (2022). *NQF Snapshot: Q4 2022*. Available at [https://www.acecqa.gov.au/sites/default/files/2023-02/NQF\\_Snapshot\\_Q4\\_2022.pdf](https://www.acecqa.gov.au/sites/default/files/2023-02/NQF_Snapshot_Q4_2022.pdf)

<sup>7</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), Melbourne.



Area of the draft vision	CYDA's feedback
	<p>Standards for Education (2005).</p> <p>Article 7(3) of the CRPD states “<i>Children with disabilities have the right to express their views freely on all matters affecting them, their views being given due weight in accordance with their age and maturity, on an equal basis with other children, and to be provided with disability and age-appropriate assistance to realize that right</i>”. Article 12 of the CRC states “<i>States Parties shall assure to the child who is capable of forming his or her own views the right to express those views freely in all matters affecting the child, the views of the child being given due weight in accordance with the age and maturity of the child.</i>”</p> <p>However, there are currently few mechanisms to implement these rights in Australia in practice.</p>
<p>*Families: Every parent can access an affordable, high-quality service to support their participation in the workforce, and the associated social and economic benefits.</p>	<p>Children with disability look to their family first and foremost for protection from harm and for guidance to navigate their lives safely and securely. Where families must deal with ableism, structural inequity and deeply held societal beliefs about their own role as family, children with disability are immediately placed at a disadvantage. This disadvantage is not because of the nature of their disability but society's inability to support and provide adjustments for their differences.</p> <p>At times, there is a risk that families divert most of their attention and effort to early childhood intervention. The places where it is delivered and the people responsible for services and supports, feel welcoming, supportive and understanding. People and places in the child's or their family's own local community may feel less so. Families tell CYDA they go where they and their child feel welcome and understood. Any exclusion or isolation does everyone harm. Young children, disabled or non-disabled, miss out on formative experiences together. It is therefore critical for the role of ECEC to be recognised by all parties, including families, involved in the early development of children.</p>
<p>*ECEC workforce: The ECEC workforce is highly skilled, valued, and professionally recognised and the sector is supported to attract and retain workers.</p>	<p>A qualified, fairly paid and supported workforce is critical to the experience of children with disability and their families in early childhood settings. The workforce also needs reform to the ECEC policy framework to support their efforts including the</p>

Area of the draft vision	CYDA's feedback
	<p>Inclusion Support Program (ISP).</p> <p>As highlighted by Early Childhood Australia (ECA) in their 2022–23 Federal Budget Pre-Budget Submission<sup>8</sup>, the ISP is under pressure from:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• increased demand from ECEC services for inclusion support throughout the period of the pandemic</li> <li>• gaps between funding and costs of providing additional educators through the program</li> <li>• mismatched growth in demand and growth in the funding of the program</li> <li>• funding not covering the true costs of providing the service</li> </ul> <p>CYDA supports ECA's proposals including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• comprehensive research be undertaken into the effectiveness of the current ISP, including what is driving demand and constraining delivery</li> <li>• exploration of what models could be implemented to support ECEC services in the current context of workforce shortages, where additional educators may not be readily available</li> <li>• identification of models that focus on bridging capacity-building and direct support for children</li> <li>• exploring ways that the system could address need for children to improve both their inclusion and outcomes</li> <li>• support development and access to a suite of professional learning to support inclusive practice and more informed responses to children with complex or additional needs</li> </ul>
<p>*Government: Governments take a holistic approach as stewards of the ECEC system in partnership with the sector, shaping a system that is nationally coherent and connected and responsive to community needs and outcomes for families, providers, and the workforce.</p>	<p>For all levels of government policy to reflect the needs of children and young people with disability and for the respective departments to follow through on effective service and strategy delivery, requires meaningful consultation with, children and young people with disability and their families and caregivers. This inclusion must be genuine and built on co-design principles.</p>
<b>Levers</b>	
<p>Governments, as the stewards of the system, have powerful levers available to them to shape the system to meet</p>	<p><i>To what extent do you agree that the levers (such as funding, regulation and policy) and enablers (such as leadership, data and evidence, and accountability</i></p>

<sup>8</sup> Early Childhood Australia. (2022). 2022–23 Federal Budget Pre-Budget Submission. Available at: [https://treasury.gov.au/sites/default/files/2022-03/258735\\_early\\_childhood\\_australia.pdf](https://treasury.gov.au/sites/default/files/2022-03/258735_early_childhood_australia.pdf)

Area of the draft vision	CYDA's feedback
<p>the vision. These levers include:</p> <p>Funding: The way that funding is allocated and to whom has an enormous impact on the way the system operates. Funding policy must be an enabler, not a barrier to access.</p> <p>Regulation: Laws and regulations shape the system to respond in a particular way to implement governments' overall policy intent. Safety and quality standards underpin the system.</p> <p>Policy: Governments actively intervene in the system to forge strategic partnerships, broker solutions, or address particular areas of need.</p>	<p><i>frameworks) are what is needed to support the draft national ECEC vision?</i></p> <p>CYDA recommends that levers for government needs to include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• protection for the educational rights of children by funding and implementing an independent oversight body to ensure that education providers – in early childhood, school, post-school etc settings – are meeting their legal obligations and complaints can be independently investigated, monitored and resolved</li> <li>• investment to involve and engage children and young people with disability across ECEC to break down barriers to participating in consultative activities. Engagement and co-design needs to inform policy and service development</li> <li>• outcomes monitoring for children with disability to improve the available data and outcomes reporting across Australia's Disability Strategy and links to data across education as outlined under the National School Reform Agreement</li> </ul>
<b>Enablers</b>	
<p>If we are to realise this vision, there are a number of enablers we need.</p> <p>Governments will collaborate with the sector to ensure these enablers are in place.</p>	<p><i>What does stewardship of the early childhood education and care sector look like from your perspective?</i></p> <p><i>How could the current scope, principles, statements, levers and / or enablers be improved to better reflect and support the draft national ECEC vision?</i></p>
<p>Workforce: Attracting, training and retaining a high-quality workforce is a critical factor in achieving the vision.</p>	<p>CYDA grounds our work in evidence and a human rights approach. There are a range of international instruments that establish normative standards and principles for the treatment of children and young people with disability.</p>
<p>Leadership: Quality leadership is essential at all levels: leadership from governments and within governments, leadership from prominent advocates and community members, leadership by providers and within the workforce. Leadership must be effective, clear, and aligned to the vision.</p>	<p>CYDA encourages and supports any vision for early childhood making reference to key policy settings and principles including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The United Nations Charter on the Rights of People with Disability (CRPD)</li> <li>• Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC)</li> </ul>

Area of the draft vision	CYDA's feedback
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination</li> <li>• International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights</li> <li>• International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights</li> <li>• Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples</li> </ul> <p>All children or young people are more than their disability, their education and more than their health. Consistent with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child<sup>9</sup>, and the CPRD, Australian children and young people with disability should feel healthy, safe, connected, supported, challenged, and engaged.</p>
<p>Data and evidence: Policies, models, and interventions must be underpinned by comprehensive high-quality data and evidence.</p>	<p>Efficient and effective data collection is a key policy priority for CYDA, and it is essential for improving outcomes for Australia's children with disability. As a representative organisation, CYDA uses multiple avenues to understand the experiences of children and young people so we can best provide an informed voice on the social issues important to them. One of these avenues is the use of desk top research methods to gather data. However, often CYDA is unable to ascertain information specific to children and young people with disability because many data sets are aggregated at a more macro level, lacking the granularity needed to understand children and young people with disability. As noted in Australia's Disability Strategy 2021–2031, a range of stakeholders need to <i>"...work together to develop a comprehensive data strategy in 2022. This will ensure data needed to measure outcomes for people with disability is collected, shared and progressively improved"</i>.<sup>10</sup></p> <p>As the <a href="#">Australian Institute of Health and Welfare</a> (AIHW) notes, "...there are currently no national indicators to measure how children transition through major development stages, or how children interact with services and move through different systems..." and "... there is limited ability to track children</p>

<sup>9</sup> Convention on the Rights of the Child, 1989 entry into force 2 September 1990, in accordance with article 49, <https://www.unicef.org/child-rights-convention/convention-text>

<sup>10</sup> Commonwealth of Australia (Department of Social Services). (2021). *Australia's Disability Strategy 2021-2031*. Available at: <https://www.disabilitygateway.gov.au/document/3106>

Area of the draft vision	CYDA's feedback
	<p>through different data sources to assess their outcomes".<sup>11</sup></p> <p>Without high-quality data, there are limited opportunities to develop evidence-based approaches to protect children and young people and monitor existing and new interventions.<sup>12</sup></p>
<p>Accountability framework: Clear roles and responsibilities are critical, especially with shared system stewardship.</p>	<p>Any framework for accountability is dependent upon data – transparent and reliable. The direct experience of children and young people with disability and the policy experience of CYDA demonstrates that there is a great need to improve the collection and use of data at a range of levels within the ECEC system, at the individual, system, and jurisdictional levels. Additionally, there is a need to examine how data is used to inform policy and practice in the ECEC system.</p>
<p>Communities and families: Services must be shaped around the needs of communities and families of all backgrounds including First Nations people.</p>	<p>The Australian Early Development Census (AEDC) covers children's development in five domains: physical health and wellbeing, social competence, emotional maturity, language and cognitive skills (school-based), communication skills and general knowledge. AEDC publicly available data at a community level includes demographic data for all children included in the census but includes scores only from children who don't have any diagnosed "special need" (disability). The Front Project noted this exclusion in its 2022 report 'Supporting all children to thrive: The importance of equity in early childhood education.'<sup>13</sup></p>
<p>Philanthropy: The not-for profit sector plays a fundamental role in the sector including direct provision and the important role of philanthropic advocacy and investment</p>	<p>While the not-for-profit sector may play a fundamental role, there is a need to invest in further funding for independent disability advocacy for families, to ensure children can have the equitable and accessible ECEC experience as outlined in the draft vision. Where there are specific state and territory-based organisations for children and young</p>

<sup>11</sup> AIHW 2020. Australia's children. Cat. no. CWS 69. Canberra: AIHW Available at: <https://www.aihw.gov.au/getmedia/6af928d6-692e-4449-b915-cf2ca946982f/aihw-cws-69-print-report.pdf.aspx?inline=true>

<sup>12</sup> Wayland, S & Hindmarsh, G. (2017). Understanding safeguarding practices for children with disability when engaging with organisations. Available at [Understanding safeguarding practices for children with disability when engaging with organisations | Child Family Community Australia](https://www.aifs.gov.au/child-family-community-australia/publications/understanding-safeguarding-practices-for-children-with-disability-when-engaging-with-organisations) (aifs.gov.au)

<sup>13</sup> The Front Project (2022) Supporting all children to thrive: The importance of equity in early childhood education. Available at: <https://www.thefrontproject.org.au/policy-and-research/research-reports/supporting-all-children-to-thrive>

Area of the draft vision	CYDA's feedback
	<p>people with disability, it is easier to have their issues resolved. In many states and territories there are no specialised services, and CYDA hear numerous reports of the difficulty young people and families have in accessing the support they need.</p>
<b>Outcomes</b>	
<p>*Successful implementation of the draft national ECEC vision would improve the early childhood education and care system for children and families, as well as the ECEC workforce.</p>	<p><i>To what extent do you agree with the following statements:</i></p> <p>Too often in the past we have seen hopeful and strong visions in plans, but then fallen short in terms of investment and implementation. Beyond the shortcomings on paper, this lack of progress and accountability has life-changing consequences for children with disability. Too often, CYDA hears stories of children with disability 'falling through the gaps' due to the lack of clarity of responsibilities between national and state and territory systems. This has never been more evident, with the Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People with Disability highlighting the neglect children and young people with disability experience across systems and their intersections including, but not limited to, the NDIS, education, health, justice, out-of-home care, and housing.</p> <p>It is often difficult for representative and advocacy organisations, researchers, services and the public alike to fully understand the success (or pitfalls) of strategies, programs and policies affecting children with disability because there is a lack of sufficient data. Publicly available disaggregated data is particularly lacking.</p> <p><i>What changes would you expect to see as a result of the draft national ECEC vision implementation (e.g. what level of communication would you expect from government about the progress of the vision)?</i></p> <p>To realise the vision and ensure children and families do not suffer the burden of bureaucratic pitfalls, the following is required:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Establishment of a robust outcomes framework</li> <li>2. An independent body to report on the progress of governments</li> <li>3. Genuine commitment by governments over time.</li> </ol> <p>The outcomes framework should include clear delegation of responsibilities between national, state</p>
<p>*The draft national ECEC vision outcomes for children, families, the ECEC workforce and government adequately incorporate and align to the underlying principles as set by the National Cabinet.</p>	



Area of the draft vision	CYDA's feedback
	<p>and territory and local governments and include shared ownership by all departments that children with disability intersect with. The outcomes included should be established from a foundation of human rights as per relevant United Nations agreements, including the Convention on the Rights of the Child, and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.</p> <p>While disaggregated data by disability and by age is difficult to obtain in itself, it is almost impossible to get data for children with disability with other intersectional characteristics such as gender diversity, those from First Nations or culturally and linguistically diverse communities, socio-economic status or location (e.g., rural/remote). To ensure the vision and resulting outcomes are genuinely reflective of the experiences of different groups, and that its progress can be monitored, CYDA recommends intersectional and disaggregated data is collected and monitored for all cohorts and demographics (e.g., age, regionality/rurality, socio-economic status, ethnicity, gender diversity, etc.).</p> <p><i>How could the current scope, principles, statements, levers and / or enablers be improved to better reflect and support the draft national ECEC vision?</i></p> <p>CYDA recommends that the vision and any resulting frameworks include clear accountability measures for all parties involved. We hear from our membership that they often have difficulties accessing supports, with different departments and systems passing the buck to other departments and systems who they believe are 'more responsible' for providing support e.g. NDIS vs ISP.</p>
<b>Presentation</b>	
<p>*The draft national ECEC vision is easy to read and understand</p>	<p>CYDA understands the desire to present all the relevant sections of the vision on a single page but suggests it might work better to pull the outcomes over to a second page and outline short-, medium- and long-term outcomes against the four areas of the vision.</p> <p>This would also allow for a more logical flow of scope to principles to vision to levers and enablers and then outcomes.</p>



Area of the draft vision	CYDA's feedback
<p>*The presentation and layout of the draft national ECEC vision is easy to follow</p>	<p>The <a href="#">Disability Discrimination Act 1992</a> requires agencies to ensure people with disability have the same access to information and services as others in the community. Online, this means to design and build digital content that meets the World Wide Web Consortium's (W3C) accessibility guidelines.</p> <p>The final vision should also be presented in Auslan and Easy Read versions to ensure it is accessible to a wider audience.</p> <p><i>How could the visual presentation of the vision be improved?</i></p> <p>Accessibility notes:</p> <p>CYDA suggests being careful when using a dark background, to make sure the background is dark enough and the writing is clear enough to be able to read it.</p> <p>If there is a strong user need to provide a PDF, the document must still be accessible and may need an accessibility statement so users can request the information in a different format.</p> <p>To make a PDF accessible, structural elements such as headings need to be marked-up so that a screen reader can follow the logical order of the content.</p> <p>Accessibility guide for low- vision or blind</p> <p>Non-text content (images and videos) must have a text equivalent.</p> <p>Screen reader assessment (clickability)</p> <p>Ensure that interactive elements are accessible and properly labelled for screen reader users. This means that all clickable elements should be announced by the screen reader and users should be able to understand the purpose of the element and navigate to it using the keyboard.</p> <p>ARIA attributes</p> <p>ARIA (Accessible Rich Internet Applications) attributes are used to improve the accessibility of web content and applications by providing additional information to assistive technologies, like screen readers. ARIA attributes help define the roles, states, and properties of various elements on a web page, making it easier for users with disabilities to interact with and understand the content.</p>

## CYDA's vision of early childhood for children with disability

The early years of a child's development can impact their entire lives. Accessible and inclusive early childhood experiences – play, learning, care, education, and development - are one of the surest and most sustainable pathways to an inclusive life and all the benefits that brings to the child, their family, peers, and their community.

*"Inclusion means that every child has access to, participates meaningfully in, and experiences positive outcomes from early childhood education and care programs."<sup>14</sup>*

**The vision of early childhood for children with disability (the early childhood vision) means:**

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <b>1. Activate our children's voices</b>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• activating and collecting input from young children on their experiences and goals</li><li>• families, caregivers, communities and systems have high expectations and aspirations for children</li></ul> |
| <b>2. Support the workforce</b>           | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• all stakeholders drive inclusion from the earliest age, focusing on access, engagement and development</li></ul>   |
| <b>3. Calibrate the funding</b>           | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• investing in inclusive and accessible environments where children are welcomed and valued</li></ul>  |
| <b>4. Enhance support and adjustments</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• investing in support and adjustments for children and their families across local communities where they live, play and learn</li></ul>  |
| <b>5. Collaborate</b>                     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• collecting and sharing data to understand outcomes and drive investment and accountability</li></ul>   |

---

<sup>14</sup> Early Childhood Australia. (2016). *Statement on the inclusion of every child in early childhood education and care*. Available at: <https://www.earlychildhoodaustralia.org.au/our-work/inclusion-resources/>

## Challenges with delivering on the early childhood vision

The people, places and systems that relate to early childhood including— maternity hospitals, playgroups, early childhood education and care settings, child health, family support, the NDIS early childhood approach, housing, social services and child protection – are somewhat disconnected.

These systems span federal and state/territory governments, and separate ministries and departments within governments. This complexity is confusing for families and caregivers to navigate and children risk falling between the gaps of a fragmented system.

### Challenges to be addressed

- Lack of voice and agency for children and young people with disability
- Workforce burden; largely underpaid and under resourced
- Compounding and ongoing impact of systemic and structural inequity
- Inherent ableism and societal beliefs undermining human rights and legislation
- Policy settings and structures of Australia's federal, state, territory and local government
- Relatively new investment in the National Disability Data Asset and continuing data gaps and deficiencies

### Areas for reform

- Early childhood education and care (ECEC) sector including the Inclusion Support Program (ISP)
- Early childhood approach of the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS); consider recommended changes that emerge from the outcome of the Independent Review of the NDIS (2022/2023)
- Other areas including but not limited to:
  - Effective design and use of community-based services and support models
  - Variations in experience and documentation for transitions to school
  - Maternal and childhood health services

### Levers for change

- [Australia's Disability Strategy 2021-2031](#)
- [Disability Standards for Education](#)
- [Review of the NDIS](#)
- [National School Reform Agreement](#)
- [Disability Royal Commission](#)
- [National Disability Data Asset](#)
- [National Disability Research Partnership](#)
- [The Australian Institute Disaster Resilience](#)

## Experiences of early childhood education and care

In 2019, children with disability made up 6.8% of those enrolled in a preschool program in the year before full time schooling (children aged 4 and those aged 5 who were not repeating).<sup>15</sup>

### CYDA's ECEC Survey 2022

CYDA has been gathering feedback on educational experiences from its members via formal surveys since 2010. These surveys have consistently found that students with disability are excluded in their education. CYDA introduced an ECEC-specific survey (as part of a suite of education surveys undertaken in 2022) to understand whether the same kinds of issues are experienced in early childhood education and care settings.

The results of CYDA's ECEC Survey 2022 are shared in the [report](#): *"Taking the first step in an inclusive life - experiences of Australian early childhood education and care"*.<sup>16</sup> This CYDA survey (which included majority responses from family members of children and young people with disability) provides vital information on children and families experiences including;

- Early childhood education settings accessed,
- supports received by young children, and;
- outlines areas of concern.

Despite the majority of respondents indicating that their child was welcomed in ECEC settings, such positive experiences are overshadowed by concerning reports of bullying, exclusion and limitations to engagement activities as the following results indicate:

- 83% agreed or strongly agreed that their child was made to feel welcome
- 78% agreed or strongly agreed that family or caregivers were made to feel welcome by ECEC settings
- Nearly 30% reported exclusion from excursions, events or activities and about the same number reported bullying from other children or staff
- One in five reported that their child had been refused enrolment
- Nearly a quarter said their child had been limited in the number of hours they were allowed to attend

### The Early Learning Monitor 2022

The Early Learning Monitor<sup>17</sup> is a national survey conducted by Essential Research on behalf of Thrive by Five. The monitor was first run in 2021, this is its second year.

The research shows there is wide agreement with statements relating to the importance of education options for preschool children with disability including:

---

<sup>15</sup> Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (2022) People with disability in Australia, AIHW, Australian Government, accessed 03 November 2022.

<sup>16</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), Melbourne.

<sup>17</sup> Thrive by Five. (2022). The Australian Early Learning Monitor Available at: <https://thrivebyfive.org.au/earlylearningmonitor/>

- 80% agree it is important for all children's development to interact with peers of different backgrounds and needs
- 77% believe ECEC need to ensure that children with a disability are not subject to exclusion from activities or other discrimination
- 68% believe all ECEC should provide all reasonable adjustments and supports to educate children with a disability in the same classroom as other children
- 68% agree acceptance of enrolment to ECEC should not be affected by a child's disability

## Further information and resources

CYDA's work is rights-based and led by the direct experiences and diverse voices and visions of children and young people with disability across Australia. CYDA grounds its work in evidence and a human rights approach.

### CYDA's work on early childhood

1. [Report](#): Taking the first step in an inclusive life Experiences of Australian early childhood education and care
2. National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children 2009-2020, [CYDA Submission](#)
3. National Strategy to Prevent Child Sexual Abuse Final Development Consultation Paper [Response](#)
4. NDS & NDIS Outcomes Framework Introductory Paper, [CYDA Submission](#)
5. [Pre-Budget submission](#): Drive inclusion and equity for children and young people with disability 2021-22
6. [Pre-Budget submission](#): Invest in children and young people with disability: their voices and their future 2023-24
7. Review of the Disability Standards for Education 2005, [CYDA Submission](#) 2020
8. Senate Inquiry into on the national trend of school refusal, CYDA [submission](#)
9. Senate Select Committee on Autism inquiry, [CYDA Submission](#)
10. Tasmania's Child and Youth Wellbeing Strategy, [CYDA Submission](#)
11. [Submission](#) to the National Disability Strategy beyond 2020
12. [Response](#) to the DRC's Rights and Attitudes issues paper
13. [What young people with disability said: Awareness, Access + Inclusion](#)
14. [Briefing Paper](#) for the Families Australia and Children and Young People with Disability Australia (CYDA) Forum
15. [Submission](#) to the Supporting young children and their families early, to reach their full potential consultation paper

### CYDA fact sheets

- [Understanding ECI language](#)
- [Supporting the development of children and young people with disability](#)
- [Services and supports in the early years](#)
- [About family-centred practice](#)
- [Building strong families](#)
- [Tips for early intervention from CYDA Webinar on Early Childhood](#)
- [What is inclusive education?](#)
- [Addressing ableism in education](#)