

Pre-Budget 2025-26 Submission

Children and Young People with Disability Australia's (CYDA's) submission to the Australian Government Treasury's Pre-Budget 2025-26.

"It's leveling the playing field! Don't feel like you are being disadvantaged just because someone else is having that extra help they need to have a fair go." – Young person with disability, CYDA 2024 National Youth Summit

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Children and Young People
with Disability Australia



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A note on terminology:

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 Aboriginal Land.



Summary of recommendations

Recommendation 1: Invest in truly inclusive education for children and young people with disability by;

- Establishing an Inclusion Fund for Early Childhood Education and Care including increasing funding for the Inclusion Support Program.
- Funding a National Roadmap to Inclusive Education to reform Australia's education system for students with disability as recommended by the CRPD, 2016 Senate inquiry, and the Disability Royal Commission. It must include clear targets, a desegregation strategy, an ambitious timeline, and adequate resources.
- Funding the establishment of a national independent oversight body to ensure that all levels of education providers are meeting their inclusion statutory and legal obligations.
- Boosting federal school funding to guarantee quality education for students with disability. The Better and Fairer Schools (Funding Reform) Act 2024 fails to address the needs of children and young people with disability. As the key legislation driver underpinning the 2025-34 Agreement, it must include increased federal investment.

Recommendation 2: Invest in a fair, safe and accessible NDIS system for children and young people, as well as Foundational Supports both inside and outside the NDIS.

- Remove barriers to NDIS access that disproportionately impact children and young people from lower socioeconomic and culturally diverse backgrounds, as well as those with Intellectual Disability, by ensuring clearer information provision.
- Guarantee that children with disability remain in the NDIS until viable and effective Foundational Supports are available for all.
- Invest in lived experience by ensuring that the NDIS employs young people with disability and by taking a co-designed approach to Foundational Supports.

Recommendation 3: Address the unemployment and underemployment of children and young people with disability, including related cost of living issues.

- Fund the alignment of strategies across government that support young people with disability into education and employment.
- Increase access to, as well as rates of, Disability Support Pension.
- Increase the minimum wage in Australian Disability Enterprises while ensuring this does not impact access to the social safety net, and provide funding for opportunities and training to move into open employment.

Recommendation 4: Invest in individual advocacy for children and young people with disability to support rights and better outcomes, including for intersectional groups.

- Fund a specialist individual advocacy service for children and young people with disability, or alternatively provide additional funding earmarked for children and young people to existing individual disability advocacy services. Invest in targeted support for children and young people with disability from intersectional groups.

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 extensive national networks of 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 in Australia will fully exercise their rights, realise their aspirations and thrive in all communities. We do this by:

- Raising community attitudes and expectations
- Championing initiatives that promote the best start in the early years for children with disability, and their families and caregivers
- Leading social change to transform education systems to be inclusive at all points across life stages
- Advocating for systems that facilitate successful life transitions to adulthood
- Leading innovative initiatives to ensure the sustainability and impact of the organisation and the broader sector.

CYDA welcomes the opportunity to make this submission to the Australian Government's Pre-Budget 2025-26 consultation.

This submission builds on our previous Pre-Budget Submissions, which have highlighted the need for investment into the future of children and young people with disability in Australia through funding and supporting:

- NDIS reforms including Foundational Supports within and outside the NDIS
- Inclusive education
- Individual and systemic advocacy
- Genuine co-design and engagement, and
- Measures to address unemployment and underemployment especially during the cost of living crisis.

Our recent Pre-Budget Submissions can be accessed here:

- [CYDA's Pre-Budget Submission 2024-25: Charting an Inclusive Path](#)
- [CYDA's Pre-Budget Submission 2023-24: Invest in Children and Young People with Disability](#)



Recommendation 1

Invest in truly inclusive education for children and young people with disability.

Policy challenge

Students with disability are currently not fully included nor supported to reach their learning potential in the Australian education system. Segregation of students with disability continues, as well as harmful restrictive practices, bullying and discrimination.¹ Inclusion in mainstream educational settings costs less, and leads to improved outcomes for all students.² The Government also has a mandate to deliver inclusive education under Australia's Disability Strategy 2021-31, the Disability Standards for Education (2005) and as part of its response to the Disability Royal Commission.

- **Lack of funding for inclusion in Early Childhood Education and Care.** The recent Productivity Commission Inquiry Report notes the need for a dedicated Inclusion Fund including improving access to the Inclusion Support Program (ISP) through increasing funding, removing barriers to employing additional educators, and simplifying administrative requirements.³
- Students with disability face significant barriers in education, including discrimination, under-resourcing, gatekeeping and abuse. **These challenges result in poor educational experiences and outcomes, driven largely by inadequate funding for inclusive education.**

Government investment needed

- **Invest in an Inclusion Fund for Early Childhood Education and Care** including increasing funding for the Inclusion Support Program.
- **Fund a National Roadmap to Inclusive Education** to reform Australia's education system for students with disability as recommended by the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD)⁴, 2016 Senate inquiry⁵, and the Disability Royal Commission. It must include clear targets, a desegregation strategy, an ambitious timeline, and adequate resources.
- **Fund the establishment of a national independent oversight body** to ensure that all levels of education providers (State and Territory, Primary, Secondary and Tertiary) are meeting their statutory and legal obligations for inclusion.
- **Boosting federal school funding to guarantee quality education for students with disability.** The Better and Fairer Schools (Funding and Reform) Act 2024 fails to address the needs of children and young people with disability. As the foundation of the 2025-34 Agreement, it must include increased federal investment.

¹ [Smith et al \(2023\) "I Think the Teachers Need More Help": Voices of Experience from Students with Disability in Australia](#), and [CYDA \(2024\) National Youth Disability Summit: What Young People Said on Inclusive Education](#).

² [Mezzanotte \(2022\) The Social and Economic Rationale of Inclusive Education. OECD Education Working Papers](#).

³ [Productivity Commission \(2024\) A Path to Universal Early Childhood Education and Care](#), p4, p40.

⁴ Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, General Comment No 4: Article 24: Right to Inclusive Education, 16th session, UN Doc CRPD/C/GC/4 (25 November 2016) [70]

⁵ Senate Education and Employment Reference Committee, Report on Inquiry into Current Levels of Access and Attainment for Students with Disability in the School System, and the Impact on Students and Families with Inadequate Levels of Support, Recommendation 9.



Recommendation 2

Invest in a fair, safe and accessible NDIS system for children and young people, as well as Foundational Supports both inside and outside the NDIS.

Policy challenge

Despite making up 61% of NDIS participants⁶, children and young people under 25 remain marginalised due to their age, limited agency and legal constraints—children (often with undiagnosed disability) are placed in the justice system rather than supported to access the NDIS in order to receive the supports they need.

- **Barriers to access.** Multiple barriers to accessing the NDIS exclude children, young people, their families and caregivers who are from lower socio-economic backgrounds without financial means for assessments and diagnosis, as well as children and young people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds and with Intellectual Disability by assuming high levels of literacy and education.
- **Perceptions of children as cost burden.** While there are sustainability challenges to including all children requiring additional support in the NDIS, long term benefits and outcomes are equally crucial. Research suggests that for every dollar invested in early support to children with disability, the NDIS could save at least three dollars and reduce support needs in the future.⁷
- **Foundational Supports (FS).** Confusion and fear is present among children and young people with disability, their families and caregivers about what FS will entail, with rushed consultations lacking genuine co-design and concerns FS will be a mechanism for NDIS removal, without clear alternative supports.

Government investment needed

- **Remove barriers to NDIS access** that disproportionately impact children and young people from lower socioeconomic and culturally diverse backgrounds, as well as those with Intellectual Disability, by ensuring clearer information provision.
- **Guarantee children with disability remain in the NDIS until viable and effective Foundational Supports are available for all.**
- **Invest in lived experience** by ensuring that the NDIS employs young people with disability and by taking a genuinely co-designed approach to policy and program reform of Foundational Supports.

⁶ [NDIS \(2024\) Quarterly Report.](#)

⁷ [Bent et al \(2023\) What is 'Early Intervention' and How Valuable Could it Be? The Conversation,](#) and [Raising Children Network \(2023\) Early Intervention for Disability and Autism.](#)



Recommendation 3

Address the unemployment and underemployment of children and young people with disability, including related cost of living issues.

Policy challenge

Young people with disability are far more likely to be un/underemployed and have lower incomes compared with people without disability and those with disability over 25 years old.⁸ Households with children with disability also record lower incomes.⁹ This has detrimental effects on quality of life and opportunities, and exacerbates vulnerability to the cost of living crisis - especially as people with disability need to earn double that of those without disability to achieve parity due to their higher living costs.¹⁰

- **Barriers to education and employment.** Rates of educational attainment and employment have been consistently lower for young people with disability. Known barriers include poor transition planning, inaccessible education and training pathways, competitive labour markets, insufficient support or opportunities, and negative employer attitudes.^{11 12}
- **Inadequate Disability Support Pension.** The Disability Support Pension is not available or accessible to many young people with disability, and the payment amounts are not adequate to meet even basic needs.¹³
- **Segregation in Australian Disability Enterprises.** The polished pathway¹⁴ into segregated employment means that many young people with disability are paid less than minimum wage in Australian Disability Enterprises, with little opportunity to move into open and meaningful employment.¹⁵

Government investment needed

- **Fund the alignment of strategies across government** that support young people with disability into education and employment.
- **Increase access to, as well as rates of, Disability Support Pension** to ensure a dignified standard of living for children and young people with disability. Rates should account for the cost of living discrepancy.
- **Increase the minimum wage in Australian Disability Enterprises** while ensuring this does not impact access to the social safety net, and provide funding for opportunities and training to move into open employment.

⁸ AIHW (2024) [People with Disability in Australia](#), pp305, 314, 357.

⁹ AIHW (2024) [People with Disability in Australia](#), p360.

¹⁰ [Vu et al \(2020\) The Costs of Disability in Australia. Health Economics Review 10.](#)

¹¹ [Social Ventures Australia \(2024\) Voices on Work: Young People with Disability in Greater Melbourne](#), p6.

¹² [CYDA \(2024\) Submission to the Select Committee on the Cost of Living.](#)

¹³ [PWDA \(2024\) PWDA and Community Organisations Condemn Government Failure to Act on DSP Senate Inquiry Report.](#)

¹⁴ [Inclusion Australia \(2022\) The Polished Pathway.](#)

¹⁵ [Disability Support Guide \(2023\) People with Disability Paid Below Minimum Wage in ADE's.](#)



Recommendation 4

Invest in individual advocacy for children and young people with disability to support rights and better outcomes, including for intersectional groups.

Policy challenge

There is a critical shortage of individual advocacy services for people with disability and especially children and young people,¹⁶ leading to long wait times and waitlists.¹⁷ To uphold rights and ensure better outcomes in line with the CRPD, more funding for individual advocacy supports is pivotal. Research indicates that every dollar invested in advocacy supports yields over a threefold return by reducing demand on agencies such as the Human Rights Commission, Commonwealth and State Ombudsmen, Public Advocates, Disability Service Commissioners, and the NDIA, as well as lowering costs in the justice and health systems.¹⁸

- **Growing demand for individual advocacy services.** While the National Disability Advocacy Program (NDAP) is the primary source of funding for advocacy, there is currently a shortfall in the availability of individual advocacy services to meet demand, especially for children and young people with disability. Demand has peaked with the NDIS reforms and reduction of services outside the NDIS, and even more individual advocacy will be needed to manage the reforms highlighted in the NDIS Review and Disability Royal Commission.¹⁹
- **Prioritising advocacy support for intersectional groups.** There is increasing recognition that discrimination and marginalisation are compounded for children and young people with disability who are also from intersectional groups, such as First Nations, culturally and linguistically diverse, LGBTIQ+, and regional and remote communities.²⁰

Government investment needed

- **Fund a specialist individual advocacy service** for children and young people with disability, or alternatively **provide additional funding earmarked for children and young people** to existing individual disability advocacy services.
- **Invest in targeted advocacy support for children and young people with disability from intersectional groups**, such as First Nations, culturally and linguistically diverse, LGBTIQ+, and regional and remote communities.

¹⁶ [CYDA \(2024\) Pre-Budget Submission 2024-25: Charting an Inclusive Path](#)

¹⁷ [PWDA \(2024\) Joint Statement: Disability Organisations are Calling for Urgent Funding Lifeline to Address Rising Demand for Advocacy](#), and [Disability Advocacy Network Australia \(2023\) Pre Budget Submission](#)

¹⁸ [Daly et al \(2017\) A Cost-Benefit Analysis of Australian Independent Disability Advocacy Agencies](#)

¹⁹ [Disability Advocacy Network Australia \(2023\) Pre Budget Submission](#), p4.

²⁰ [Bates \(2024\) What Can we Learn from Disability Policy to Advance our Understanding of Operationalising Intersectionality in Australian Policy Frameworks? Australian Journal of Public Administration.](#)

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