

CYDA's 2025 Election Platform

Investing in children and young people
with disability is investing in Australia's
future

March 2025

About CYDA

Children and Young People with Disability Australia (CYDA) is the national peak body representing 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 [core principles](#) centre the lived experiences of children, young people and families, and acknowledge and respect diverse backgrounds and intersectional experiences.

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

Our Election Platform

Investing in children and young people with disability is investing in Australia's future.

Children and young people with disability, and their families and caregivers, need ongoing support and investment.

Currently, [70% of students with disability feel left out](#) from school. They experience [bullying, discrimination, restrictive practices, and segregation](#).

[More than four in five children with disability](#) do not get the supports they need.

Young people with disability, and their families and caregivers, face the greatest challenges of the cost-of-living crisis. They experience [lower employment rates and incomes](#), along with [higher costs](#).

Children and young people with disability also face a [serious shortage of individual advocacy services](#).

CYDA's Calls to Action

This Federal Election, we call for urgent and genuine action across **four key areas** to improve the lives of children and young people with disability, and their parents and caregivers.

1. Build a truly inclusive education system

2. Ensure a fair, safe, and accessible disability supports ecosystem

3. Address the cost-of-living crisis and unemployment impacts on young people with disability and their families

4. Invest in individual advocacy

1. Inclusive Education

We call for a truly inclusive education system at all levels.

Our Asks

- a. Put into action a **National Roadmap to Inclusive Education** for students with disability, with clear targets, responsibilities, a plan to end segregation, an ambitious timeline, and enough resources.
- b. Set up a **national independent oversight body** to make sure all education providers follow inclusion laws and meet their legal obligations.
- c. Create an **Inclusion Fund for Early Childhood Education and Care** including more funding for the [Inclusion Support Program](#), as recommended by the [Productivity Commission](#).
- d. Provide **federal funding** to schools to guarantee a **safe, quality education** for students with disability, if schools show better inclusion results
- e. Strengthen **pathways into higher education** for young people with disability and make sure they stay in education as part of [equity targets](#).

The Need for Action

Inclusion in mainstream education [costs less and improves outcomes for all students](#). It is required under Australia's Disability Strategy 2021-31 and Disability Standards for Education (2005).

A **National Roadmap** [upholds the rights](#) of children and young people with disability, and is supported by the recommendations of the [Disability Royal Commission](#).

Federal funding to schools for students with disability is important for addressing [failures](#) in the Better and Fairer Schools 2025–34 legislation to meet their needs. It will help combat [alarming rates](#) of **discrimination** and **bullying** while creating genuine inclusion.

Students with disability make up [only 10% of university enrolments](#) and rate their **higher education experience** lower than other students. The lack of inclusive and accessible environments means [fewer students with disability stay in school](#), with only [half as many getting bachelors degrees as their non-disabled peers](#).

"We need to entirely dismantle and redesign the education system in Australia because it's not meeting the needs of disabled students and thus is not inclusive."

Young person with disability, [CYDA National Summit 2023](#)

2. Fair, safe, accessible supports ecosystem

We call for a fair, safe and accessible disability supports system for children and young people with disability.

Our Asks

- a. **Guarantee that children with disability stay in the NDIS** until they can get other supports that meet their needs.
- b. Provide more intensive supports at **key transition points** including **early supports** for very young children.
- c. Invest in **lived experience** by employing young people with disability, and **co-designing** reforms.
- d. Make the **NDIS accessible** by giving participants clear information, transparent communication, and accessible assessment processes.

The Need for Action

Children and young people have specific support needs, including around early childhood, health, and education.

[61% of NDIS participants](#) are aged 2-17. [83% of those children with disability](#) have unmet support needs. These gaps are greater for families on low incomes or with adults with disability, single parent households, and those in regional or remote areas.

Children and young people with disability, their families and caregivers are concerned they will be removed **from the NDIS** [without clear alternative supports](#).

For every dollar invested in **early supports** and at [key transition points](#), the NDIS could [save at least three dollars](#) and reduce support needs in the future.

Supports must be guided by **lived experience and co-design** to centre the views of children, young people, families, and caregivers. This will make sure supports are effective, accessible, and meet the key principle of "[nothing about us without us](#)."

Barriers to NDIS access disproportionately impact children and young people from [lower socioeconomic and culturally diverse backgrounds](#), as well as [girls](#) and those with [Intellectual Disability](#).

"I live in [regional area] where we lack funding and staffing in education and health. I don't trust that there are resources for adequate support."

Parent of young person with disability, [CYDA Foundational Support survey](#)

3. Cost-of-living crisis and unemployment

We call for real action to address the unequal impacts of the cost-of-living on children and young people with disability, their families, and caregivers.

Our Asks

- a. Create a **National Youth Disability Employment Strategy** to tackle job insecurity, co-designed with young people, and invest in research to improve employment services and close service gaps.
- b. Increase **income support** to young people with disability, families and caregivers by raising JobSeeker Payment and Youth Allowance rates, and **introducing supplements** to Disability Support Pension and carer payments to provide equal support for disability and illness.
- c. Make sure **Disability Support Pension and carer payments** are accessible and available to all who need it, and not impacted by relationship status.
- d. Move away from **segregated employment** in Australian Disability Enterprises to inclusive, fair-wage jobs by phasing out the Supported Wage System and making sure employees with disability have minimum wage protections.

The Need for Action

Young people with disability, and households with children with disability, have some of the [highest unemployment rates and lowest incomes](#), alongside [higher living costs](#). They are hit hardest by the cost-of-living crisis.

A **National Youth Disability Employment Strategy** is needed to remove barriers like [poor transition planning, limited training options, lack of support and opportunities, and negative employer attitudes](#).

Income support rates are not enough to cover basic needs and keep many people in poverty. Rates must be raised and indexed to [at least \\$80 a day](#), with supplements of [at least \\$65 a week](#) for disability and illness to make up for higher living costs.

People on **Disability Support Pension** can have their payments lowered or cut depending [on a partner's income](#). [44%](#) of DSP claims are rejected each year.

The **segregated polished pathway** pushes young people with disability into Australian Disability Enterprises where they are paid [less than minimum wage](#) and have little opportunity to move into open and meaningful employment.

“Disabled young people are drowning under the rising cost of living. We’re struggling with housing, medical treatments, and basic necessities...”

Young person with disability, [2024 CYDA Cost of Living Submission](#)

4. Investing in Individual Advocacy

We call for the creation of individual advocacy services for children and young people with disability.

Our Asks

- a. Create a **specialist individual advocacy service** for children and young people with disability.
- b. Provide dedicated funding for children and young people with disability to **existing advocacy services**.
- c. Provide sustainable funding for **peer support activities** that help children and young people with disability build self-advocacy skills.
- d. Invest in **targeted support** for children and young people with disability with intersectional experiences and from diverse backgrounds

The Need for Action

There is a serious shortage of individual advocacy services for people with disability, [especially children and young people](#), leading to [long wait times](#). More advocacy support is important to uphold rights and improve outcomes.

Every dollar put into advocacy supports [saves or brings back three times that amount](#). It does this by bringing down demand on agencies like the Human Rights Commission, Commonwealth and State Ombudsmen, Public Advocates, Disability Service Commissioners, and the NDIA, and lowering costs in the justice and health systems.

Funding for a **specialist service and existing services** will help **individual advocacy services** meet rising demand for children and young people with disability. Demand has risen due to NDIS reforms and cuts to supports. It will keep growing as changes from the NDIS Review and Disability Royal Commission take effect.

Peer support services have been [proven to work](#) and are [trusted by the disability community](#). Funding must be sustainable to keep this support available.

Targeted advocacy is needed to end [discrimination and marginalisation](#) against **people with disability with intersectional experiences and diverse backgrounds**, including young people from First Nations, culturally and linguistically diverse, LGBTIQ+, and regional and remote communities.

“We have this added burden [...] there are so many different parts of our lived experience that we have to try and explain to people.”

Young person with disability, [CYDA 2021 LivedX series](#)

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