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Attention: Automation & Artificial Intelligence Branch

Please accept this letter as Children and Young People with Disability Australia (CYDA)'s feedback on Services Australia's draft Automation and AI (AAI) Ethics Framework. We appreciate the opportunity to provide comment on this important work.

About CYDA

Children and Young People with Disability Australia (CYDA) is the national representative organisation for children and young people with disability, aged 0–25 years. Our vision is that children and young people with disability fully exercise their rights, realise their aspirations and thrive in inclusive communities. Our work centres on rights-based advocacy, lived experience, and evidence-informed policy.

General comments

CYDA welcomes Services Australia's commitment to establishing an ethics framework for automation and AI use. The focus on governance, accountability and public trust is a positive step. Our feedback is offered in the spirit of constructive strengthening, with an emphasis on human rights protections and the lessons learned from past harms associated with automated decision making.

Our key concerns and suggested improvements are outlined below.

1. Strengthening human rights foundations

While the draft framework references "acting in the public interest" and "balancing ethical tensions", it would benefit from a clearer grounding in Australia's human rights obligations. Concepts such as "minimising harm and maximising benefit" can be vague without explicit principles guiding *whose* harm and benefit are considered, and on what evidence.

We recommend explicitly incorporating:

- Human rights obligations relevant to social security, non-discrimination, and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disability (CRPD)
- A clear commitment that decisions affecting a person's income, access to support, or financial liability must be guided by rights-based, evidence-based thresholds for risk and harm.

A stronger human rights framing will improve clarity, accountability and community trust.

2. Acknowledging past harms and providing meaningful safeguards

It is notable that the framework does not reference Robodebt or acknowledge the harms caused by previous automated decision-making systems. Given Services Australia's commitment to rebuilding trust, this is an important omission.

CYDA strongly recommends explicit commitments that:

- People will not be subjected to automated debt decisions without robust human oversight, transparent reasoning, and strong protections.
- Any system capable of creating debts, reducing or cancelling payments, or triggering compliance action is treated as high-risk by default.
- These systems must undergo the highest level of assurance and a process for ongoing monitoring before being deployed or scaled.

Without these commitments, the framework risks appearing disconnected from the historical context and the expectations of the community.

3. Improving protections for marginalised and priority groups

The framework acknowledges vulnerable cohorts and refers to Australia's Disability Strategy 2021-2031 and Closing the Gap, which CYDA welcomes. However, it is unclear how these references will translate into practical safeguards in AAI decision-making.

CYDA recommends that Services Australia:

- Mandate equity impact assessments for medium and high risk AAI initiatives, including analysis of differential error rates and outcomes for disabled people, First Nations people, people with low literacy, and other marginalised groups.
- Commit to publishing, or at a minimum internally reporting, error rates and model limitations disaggregated by cohort.
- Ensure affected communities and representative organisations are involved in the design and review of high-risk systems

This would provide transparency, improve fairness, and ensure that AAI systems do not amplify existing inequities.

4. Ensuring contestability, redress and proactive remediation

The "Empowering People to Speak Out" section is currently high-level and does not outline the minimum protections people can rely on when AAI affects their entitlements or compliance status.

CYDA recommends that the framework explicitly require:

- Simple, free and accessible pathways for individuals to challenge any significant decision about entitlements, compliance or debt.
- Clear timeframes and standards for responding to challenges and correcting errors.
- Proactive system-wide remediation when errors or systemic issues are identified, ensuring all affected individuals are identified and compensated, not only those who lodge complaints.

These measures are necessary to prevent harm, support procedural fairness, and maintain trust.

5. Establishing minimum transparency standards

CYDA supports the transparency principle but notes the lack of concrete baseline requirements. To be meaningful, transparency should include:

- A public register of AAI systems used in decision-making, including purpose, risk rating, and known limitations.
- Standard wording in plain language on letters, digital platforms and apps to notify people when an automated or AI-assisted process has been used in their case. This should be available in accessible formats, including Easy Read, Auslan, and multiple languages.
- Proactive disclosure of error rates, known limitations, and how issues are being monitored.


These measures align with best practice and materially improve the ability of individuals to understand and exercise their rights.

Conclusion

CYDA supports Services Australia's intention to establish an ethical, accountable and trustworthy approach to automation and AI. Strengthening the framework in the areas above will significantly improve its ability to protect the community and uphold public confidence.

If you have any questions about CYDA's submission, please contact CYDA's Policy and Research Manager at lizhudson@cyda.org.au

Yours sincerely



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