



**DANA**

Disability Advocacy  
Network Australia

**PRIORITIES PROJECT REPORT**  
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## About the Priorities Project

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The Disability Royal Commission and the NDIS Review combined made 248 recommendations that affect people with disability across many areas of their lives. The Federal Government needs a place to start disability reform that is guided by what people with disability want and need. The Priorities Project is about understanding what the disability community wants from reform, identifying the key shared priorities, and recommending practical actions to start making change happen within the next 1-2 years.

The Priorities Project was funded by private philanthropy. We thank the funder for their investment in disability reform and the opportunity to do this work.

## How we completed the Priorities Project

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The Priorities Project was about listening. We spoke to Disability Representative Organisations (disability peak bodies), DANA members, independent disability advocates, people with disability, and experts in specific priority areas, like housing, about their thoughts on Disability Royal Commission and NDIS Review recommendations, priorities, and potential actions for change.

We spoke to 130 people in 28 sessions. We ran consultations about key topics with Disability Representative Organisations, Foundational Supports consultations in each state and territory, and Reform: How do we get there? sessions, where we talked about actions to take to start reform. We also spoke to many experts and organisational representatives individually. Organisations, advocates, people with disability and experts sent us submissions, position statements, and community consultation summaries. All information was included in the project and informed our recommendations.

## What priorities did we hear about?

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The disability advocacy sector has identified six clear priorities from the reform processes:

### 1. Access and eligibility for disability support

- 88% of people with disability are not on the NDIS and there is almost no disability support available for people who are not on the NDIS.
- People with disability in regional, rural, remote and very remote areas have less access to services and supports. These areas may not have the same infrastructure as cities and need more resources and funding to provide the same levels of support.

### 2. Housing

- People with disability are more impacted by the housing crisis because of income inequality, lack of accessible housing, access to home modifications, and the impact of having to move (like losing access to local supports and specialists).
- People with disability on the NDIS can have access to some housing supports, but they need to navigate complex application and evidence pathways to access it.
- There is no real support for people with disability who need support with housing outside the NDIS, including home modifications.

### 3. Safeguarding

- There is strong agreement across the independent disability advocacy sector that current safeguarding systems and processes are not working and not protecting people with disability.
- The Disability Royal Commission has recommended closing group homes, special schools and Australian Disability Enterprises.
- People support the move towards desegregation, but need to know what is going to happen and when, and that there is going to be investment in community inclusion to support desegregation. The information that has been given so far is not enough, and not knowing what will happen and when has been distressing for people with disability.

### 4. Establishing Foundational Supports

- The disability community is concerned about what implementation of foundational supports will look like, whether it will be designed with and for people with disability, and whether it will meet the needs of the community.

### 5. Representation and inclusion

- People living in group homes or who live, work, or go to school in closed settings will be the most affected by the recommended changes and are rarely consulted with.
- Consultations on reform need to be accessible and inclusive, which does not always happen. There should be a focus on outreach and inreach to consult with people who have experienced closed settings to ensure their feedback drives reform.

### 6. Advocacy

- Advocacy is a big issue. With current funding, advocates are only able to meet half the existing demand for advocacy services. Only one in two people with disability who request advocacy support can receive it.

*“Many people with disability do not want more bureaucratic processes and professional staff or services. Their main concerns are secure accommodation, employment opportunities and affordable food, petrol and household goods.”*  
— **Disability advocate**

# What did the Disability Royal Commission and NDIS Review say about the priorities?

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Every identified priority was mentioned by the Disability Royal Commission, NDIS Review, or both. Key recommendations included:

## Access and eligibility for support

- Establishing a 'provider of last resort' scheme across states and territories to make sure there is always a provider of disability supports available.
- Ensuring support for all people with disability to navigate mainstream, foundational supports and NDIS service systems.

## Housing

- Phasing out group homes.
- Introducing Housing and Living Navigators.
- Making changes to Specialist Disability Accommodation, including changes to pricing and making more homes available.

## Safeguarding

- Establishing a 'one-stop shop' complaints process.
- Founding an NDIS Review Implementation Working Group to make sure people with disability do not fall through the cracks when reform processes begin.
- Expanding the Community Visitor Scheme to be nationally available and consistent.

## Establishing Foundational Supports

- Investing in foundational supports at both federal and state/territory levels.
- Developing a Foundational Supports Strategy.

## Representation and inclusion

- Establishing a First Nations Disability Forum.
- Investing in First Nations disability workforces in remote communities.
- While not a formal recommendation, both the Disability Royal Commission and NDIS Review talk about the need for co-design of reforms with people with disability.

## Advocacy

- Developing a program to connect people living in supported accommodation with independent disability advocacy supports.
- Funding independent disability advocacy services.



*“Understanding, wholistic case management, good planning and problem solving. Appointments and being passed from one service to another for people’s multiple needs is exhausting. We need someone to do a lot of the research for us and provide morale support as we go.” —Person with disability*

## What can we do to address these priorities?

Together with people with disability, independent disability advocates, experts and other supporters, we identified key priorities and actions for change.

For every priority, we have developed actions that can be taken in the next 1 - 2 years.

Our recommendations include actions that will help the Federal Government understand what people with disability need, trials and pilot sites of currently missing or underfunded supports and services, and recommendations that make sure people with disability are centred as the experts in disability supports and in making change.

### Priority 1: Access and eligibility for disability services and supports

1. **Pilot Community Inclusion Hubs for people with disability by** creating dedicated physical spaces where people with disability can go for support, information, and connection.
2. **Establish a disability aids and equipment scheme outside the NDIS** where people with disability outside the NDIS can apply for and receive funding for equipment, aids and assistive technology.

### Priority 2: Housing

1. **Trial specialist housing Navigators as part of NDIS reform** to ensure people with disability have comprehensive support across all types of housing – not just NDIS-funded models.
2. **Establish a home modification scheme outside the NDIS** to ensure home modifications are available to all people with disability. This should also involve identifying and addressing barriers to home modification (e.g. approval of home modifications in social housing).

### Priority 3: Safeguarding

1. **Pilot specialist case management supports for people with disability.** Groups who would benefit include people interacting with the justice system, young people at risk of having to leave their homes, transition support, family case management, and children in out of home care. This should connect to the ‘provider of last resort’ recommendations made by the Disability Royal Commission.

## Priority 4: Establishing Foundational Supports

1. **Establish a citizen science project mapping what people with disability need from foundational supports, and what existing services and supports are at risk of closure** to understand what supports currently exist, what people with disability need, and what funding and infrastructure is required to maintain and increase support availability.
2. **Invest in peer support best practice to solidify peer work as a key foundational support** by funding the development and dissemination of a peer-led networking model, curriculum and training offerings.
3. **Test a key foundational support (community transport) in areas with existing critical needs** to understand the potential impact foundational supports can have on community access and inclusion and to prepare for wider roll-out of foundational supports.

## Priority 5: Representation and inclusion

1. **Set up a Lived Experience Transition Taskforce to guide reform**, led by people with disability (particularly people with an intellectual disability) who have experienced segregation to design and advise on the transition towards desegregation.

## Priority 6: Advocacy

1. **Invest in advocacy: the foundational support to make foundational supports work.** Advocacy is currently critically underfunded, and this will increase as reform is implemented and people with disability need support to understand and manage change.





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