

Northern Territory Disability Strategy 2022–2032



TERRITORY FAMILIES,
HOUSING AND
COMMUNITIES



NORTHERN
TERRITORY
GOVERNMENT

Acknowledgement of Country

The Northern Territory Government proudly acknowledges the Traditional Owners of country throughout the Northern Territory, and recognises their continuing connection to their lands, waters and communities. We pay our respects to Aboriginal cultures; and to Elders both past and present.

We particularly acknowledge all Aboriginal people with disability, their families, and their carers.

Please be aware that this document may contain images of Aboriginal people who have passed away.



Contents

Acknowledgement of Country	2
A message from the Minister for Disabilities	4
Foreword from the Disability Advisory Committee	5
Strategy Overview	6
Vision	6
Principles	6
Key focus areas for action	6
It takes all of us to make the Territory inclusive	7
Our Territory context	8
Our alignment to other strategies and plans	10
Community consultation	12
Strategy outcomes	13
Outcome 1: People with disability have rights and choices which are protected and respected	14
Outcome 2: People with disability are included and can engage, participate and contribute to community life	16
Outcome 3: People with disability can access the places, information and services they need	18
Outcome 4: People with disability have the skills and opportunities to participate in the economy and be financially secure	20
Outcome 5: People with disability's health and wellbeing is supported	22
Accountability mechanisms	24
Notes and references	26

A message from the Minister for Disabilities

It is my honour to present the Northern Territory Disability Strategy 2022-2032 and the associated three year Action Plan 2022-2025.

This Strategy is the first of its kind in the Northern Territory, and demonstrates our genuine commitment to an inclusive Territory where people with disability are valued, respected and can contribute to community, no matter where we live.

The Strategy is a whole of government commitment that outlines the responsibilities of all sectors of government to meet their obligations under the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. It also aligns with the Australian Disability Strategy to ensure people with disability have equitable access to services and opportunities to participate in the community.

Through increased community awareness and a shared vision for an inclusive society, I know that together we can reduce disability inequity and create a foundation for all Territorians living with a disability to lead happier, healthier, safer and more fulfilling lives.

We have based our actions on what we have heard from Territorians with lived experience of disability,

mainstream service providers, the National Disability Insurance Agency, specialist disability service providers and Northern Territory government agencies. Thank you to all who contributed to the development of the Strategy and the first three year Action Plan.

The Strategy includes a focus on access for people with disability to mainstream services and the community, and the opportunity for people with disability to reach their potential. The Strategy considers the Northern Territory context and the needs of Territorians, with a focus on outcomes for Aboriginal people with disability and people with disability who live in remote regions of the Territory.

The Northern Territory Government will continue its ambition for a Territory that supports all Territorians and work towards creating a society that removes all barriers for people with disability to live full and prosperous lives.

**The Hon Ngaree Ah Kit MLA
Minister for Disabilities**



Foreword from the Disability Advisory Committee

On behalf of Territorians with disability, the Northern Territory Disability Advisory Committee (NTDAC) welcomes the release of the Northern Territory Disability Strategy 2022-2032 (the Strategy) and the first Action Plan.

The NTDAC is a diverse group of people living across the Territory including carers and people with lived experience of disability. We represent people from Central Australia through to the Top End; people who are starting on their journey, and those with experience to share. We are united by our shared desire for greater inclusion and acceptance of disability and people with disability across the Territory.

The NTDAC is proud of this 10-year Strategy. We thank all those who have contributed to the Strategy, and we are pleased to see the diversity of voices we heard from reflected in the Strategy, including the voices of people with disability, their families and carers,

service providers, government organisations and the general public. The Strategy focuses on the things that are important to us as individuals and the things that will make a difference to how people with disability live our lives.

The NTDAC will monitor progress and provide advice to the Minister on key issues regarding the implementation of the Strategy. All Territorians have a part to play to making the Territory a more inclusive and welcoming place and we look forward to seeing the progress that is made over the next decade.

Chris Blackham-Davison
Chair, Northern Territory
Disability Advisory Committee



Strategy Overview

The Northern Territory Disability Strategy 2022 – 2032 aims to address the barriers to equality, accessibility and inclusion experienced by Territorians with disability.

People with disability have guided the development of the Strategy; their voices, experiences and choices are reflected throughout.

The Strategy is for all Territorians: for the more than one in nine Territorians with disability; for their families and carers; for the businesses that employ and support people with disability; for the community groups that welcome people with disability; and for the public sector that provides services that everyone can access.

The Northern Territory (NT) Government believes that an inclusive and accessible society is fundamental to improving the lives of people with disability and to creating a welcoming and thriving Territory. The Strategy and accompanying Action Plan contain commitments by the NT Government and other stakeholders to make this happen. Beyond this, all stakeholders are encouraged to commit to the vision and principles, and to identify the actions that they can take to make a difference.

Vision

An inclusive Territory where people with disability are valued, respected and can contribute to community, no matter where we live.

Principles

The Strategy is based on the principles of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD), which Australia has agreed to. The Strategy is also guided by the following principles, co-developed with people with disability:

- Promote the dignity, autonomy, and freedom of people with disability.
- Champion the key role of those who support people with disability: families, kinship families, carers, guardians, and significant persons.
- Ensure people with disability aren't disadvantaged because of personal circumstances, such as age or home location.
- Recognise the important role of Aboriginal peoples in achieving the outcomes of the Strategy.
- Value the importance of culture to improving life outcomes.

- Create environments that are culturally safe for Aboriginal people.
- Make people with disability the key decision makers in decisions that affect them, including by promoting collaboration and co-design between people with disability and other stakeholders.
- Recognise that disability is only one part of someone's story.

Key focus areas for action

There are five key areas the NT Government will focus on to improve inclusion, accessibility and equality for people with disability in the Northern Territory:

- rights and choices
- inclusive communities
- accessible communities
- financial security and employment
- health and wellbeing

These key areas were developed from consultation across the Territory with people with disability, service providers, NT Government agencies and other stakeholders.

It takes all of us to make the Territory inclusive

It takes all of us to make the Territory a more inclusive place for the 20,500 Territorians with disability. People with disability are our friends, our colleagues, our family, our neighbours, and our customers.

Creating sustainable change across the Northern Territory community and the economy goes beyond what is in the government's control. Increased inclusion requires a Strategy that is owned by the whole community; by those that need to be included and by those that need to do the including – employers, business leaders, community leaders, local governments, arts, culture, sports organisations and more.

The Strategy builds on the progress of many Territorians who have been working hard to create a more inclusive and welcoming Territory. While we have made significant headway, there is a lot of work to do. Over the next 10 years, we all need to roll up our sleeves and change what is in our control to make sure that Territorians **with disability are valued, respected, and can contribute to community, no matter where we live.**



Our Territory context

Our Territory is a large and unique place that is home to 250,000 people¹, with more than one in nine living with a disability.²

Our enormous landscape covers the desert of the Red Centre to the tropics of the Top End. While many Territorians live in Darwin and Alice Springs, a high proportion of people live in regional towns and remote communities. We are also one of Australia's most culturally diverse places. There are many different languages spoken and cultures practiced across the Territory.

Every person with disability in the Territory is different and comes with their own unique story. Consistent with Australia's Disability Strategy, this Strategy recognises that people can be impacted by multiple forms of discrimination and disadvantage due to their race, sex, gender identity, sexual orientation, impairment, class, religion, age, social origin and other identity markers. These can have overlapping and compounding effects and can interact with other factors such as living in regional and remote areas. Recognising this 'intersectionality' and the diversity of people with disability is fundamental to a more inclusive Territory.

Over the last decade, the Territory disability landscape has changed dramatically. In 2013, Australia created the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) and changed the way people with disability receive specialist disability supports. The NT Government funds around half of the cost of the NDIS in the Territory and remains committed to making it work well for Territorians with disability. This includes supporting NDIS participants to use their funding and having more choice of providers.

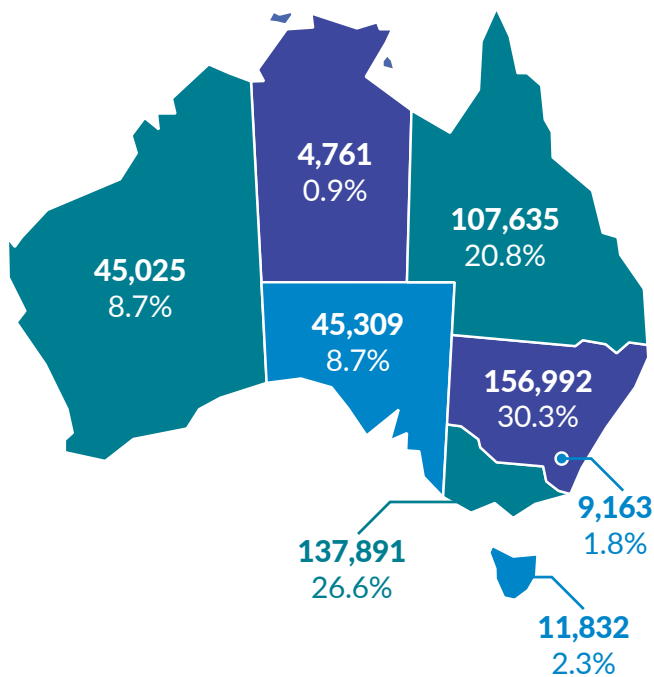
However, only one fifth of people with disability in the Territory are eligible for the NDIS. The NDIS does not cover the broader range of government services that people with disability are eligible to access along with other Territorians – including education, health, housing, transport, justice, family support and employment services. We know that there is more to do to ensure people with disability across the Territory have full access to all these services, particularly to increase access to services in remote locations and

to improve the cultural safety of services for Aboriginal people with disability.

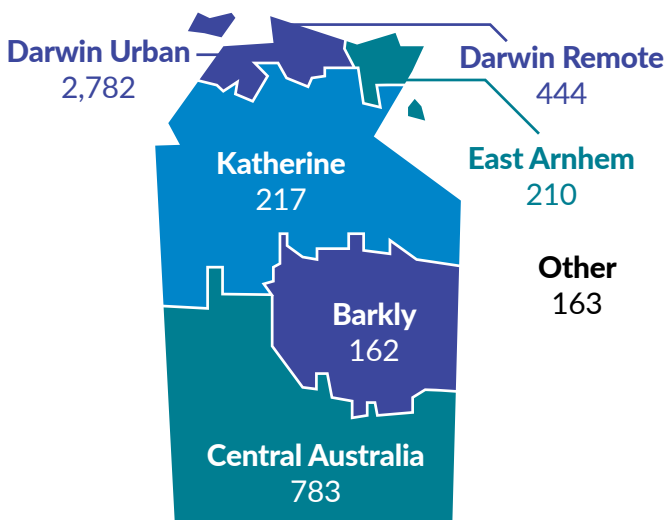
In 2019, the Australian Government set up the Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People with Disability. The NT Government welcomes the recommendations of the Royal Commission due in 2023 and will review the Strategy and its implications for the Territory when they are released. Already, the Commission has reported on the importance of Aboriginal member-led organisations leading services and combating 'double discrimination' of Aboriginal people with disability.

Key Statistics

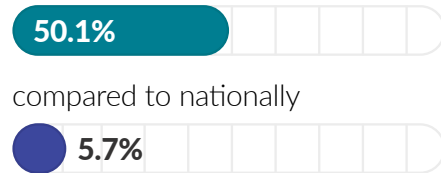
People with active NDIS plans in Australia by states and territories³



Northern Territory NDIS participants per region⁵



NDIS participants in the Northern Territory who identify as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander⁴



518,668 NDIS participants nationally
4,864 in the Northern Territory



80,239 children (younger than seven) in the NDIS accessing early connections from the Early Childhood Approach (ECA) nationally
103 children accessing ECA in the Northern Territory.⁶

Our alignment to other strategies and plans

The Strategy exists alongside and reinforces other international, national and Territory commitments, legislation, and strategies that will contribute to improved outcomes for people with disability.

Australia has ratified the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. Australia's Disability Strategy 2021-31 (ADS) sets a national agenda for change and translates the UN Convention into Australian priorities. The Strategy draws from the UN Convention and ADS and adapts them to the NT context, setting a local path of reform.

Other national and Territory reforms also interact with the Strategy and will help to increase access and inclusion for people with disability. For example, the National Agreement on Closing the Gap has informed the Strategy and will help Aboriginal Australians with disability and their communities to get the services they need and support their right to self-determination as partners in service delivery.

In the Territory, a range of strategies and initiatives contribute to meeting the needs of Territorians with disability.

The Territory also has responsibilities under our own legislation, including the *Disability Services Act 1993*, the *Anti-Discrimination Act 1992*, the *Guardianship of Adults Act 2016*, and the *Carers Recognition Act 2006*. These laws provide the legislative framework for the implementation of the Strategy.

NT Disability Strategy – disability intersection



Community consultation

The NT Government started on the journey to develop the Territory's first disability strategy in early 2021.

The Department of Territory Families, Housing and Communities (the Department) developed a draft Strategy and began consultation with key stakeholders in July 2021. The draft Strategy was tested and refined through extensive consultation. Online and face to face consultation occurred between October and November 2021 with various working groups and people with lived experience of disability. Written submissions and survey responses were received from the public up until December 2021.

Over six months, more than 300 people contributed their feedback and ideas to the Strategy including people with disability, their families and carers, community members, mainstream services, disability service providers, government stakeholders and other members of the public.

Feedback and ideas were gathered from the public including from:

- 146 community stakeholders from Tennant Creek, Amoonguna and Alice Springs, Darwin, Katherine, Tiwi,

Nhulunbuy (through Darwin Community Legal Services – DCLS and Disability Advocacy Services – DAS)

- 55 public survey responses through the Have Your Say webpage
- 29 public submissions through the Have Your Say webpage
- Four working groups were established to support engagement with key stakeholders and to help develop the Strategy:
 - » Working Group 1: People with lived experience of disability and advocates
 - » Working Group 2: NT Government and Statutory Offices
 - » Working Group 3: Mainstream services
 - » Working Group 4: NDIA and specialist disability providers

Stakeholders described the change they wanted to see over the next 10 years and developed ideas to make this change happen.



“People with disability need to lead the change.”

“A good life is about choice – without choice there is no control.”

“There needs to be greater fairness and justice in the distribution of resources and services in remote Australia.”

“We need a more inclusive society... this means not just allowing people with disability to join in, but really changing things so people can fully participate.”

“We know what is best for us.”

– Consultation participants

Strategy outcomes

The Strategy is built around five outcomes for people with disability. These outcomes reflect the key themes that were identified by people with disability through the consultation process. Each outcome has a set of priorities for the life of the Strategy.

Outcome	Our Priorities	
1 – People with disability have rights and choices which are protected and respected	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Empower people with disability to know their rights and have the tools to exercise them • Strengthen informal advocacy networks and resources • Enhance formal disability advocacy services 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deliver disability confident and accessible justice and corrections systems • Deliver disability confident and accessible police, fire and emergency services • Support eligible Territorians to access the NDIS
2 – People with disability are included and can engage, participate and contribute to community life	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Address barriers to participation in social, recreation, sporting, arts, cultural events and activities • Support community services to be disability confident and inclusive 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase the community’s visibility, understanding and acceptance of people with disability • Recognise and promote the role of carers
3 – People with disability can access the places, information and services they need	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase the availability of housing that meets universal design principles • Ensure universal design in public places and buildings • Enhance the accessibility of transport options 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support access to technology that improves people’s lives • Improve the accessibility of public information and communications • Increase the choice of quality, culturally competent disability service providers across the Territory
4 – People with disability have the skills and opportunities to participate in the economy and be financially secure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide education that meets an individual’s lifelong learning needs • Expand options for young people transitioning from school to employment or other forms of economic participation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase employment of people with disability • Support employers to be disability confident
5 – People with disability’s health and wellbeing is supported	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deliver disability confident, inclusive, and accessible health services • Increase access to health education and prevention supports 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enhance early identification of disability and referral to early intervention services • Support all services to work together to improve a person’s health outcomes

Outcome 1: People with disability have rights and choices which are protected and respected

What success looks like

“I feel safe, I know my rights, and I know how to exercise them if needed.”

“There are people who advocate for me and for other people with disability, and I can turn to them if I need to.”

– Consultation participants

Why this is important

Human rights are an important part of everyday life; going to school, seeing a doctor and getting a job are all basic human rights. People with disability want greater public awareness of the rights and needs of people with disability. As people with disability experience greater challenges to their rights than their peers without a disability, more work needs to be done to ensure the rights of people with disability are exercised and protected.

People with disability face barriers to participating fairly in the justice system, and are especially overrepresented in the criminal justice system.⁷ Courts, corrections and the judiciary all have a role in ensuring that people

with disability understand and can exercise their rights; in building their own disability confidence and awareness; and promoting accessibility for people with disability.

Aboriginal Australians with disability are almost twice as likely to experience discrimination as non-Aboriginal people with disability.⁸ There is also an overrepresentation of Aboriginal adults and young people with disability in the justice system and 95 per cent of Aboriginal Australians charged with criminal offences who appear before courts have an intellectual disability, a cognitive impairment or a mental illness.⁹

Advocacy is an essential part of promoting, protecting, and supporting a person’s human rights and is a fundamental part of the Strategy that cuts across all areas. A strong disability advocacy sector is a powerful tool for people with disability to address this inequity and have a voice.¹⁰ Advocacy extends to those who support people with disability. It is particularly important that people with disability are supported to advocate for their own rights.

Access to reasonable and necessary supports funded by the NDIS is a right for eligible people with disability. Supporting eligible Territorians to access the scheme will maximise the local benefits of the NDIS.



Our priorities

- **Empower people with disability to know their rights and have the tools to exercise them:** people with disability (including young people) understand their rights and are aware of the supports available to help them exercise their rights. This includes increased awareness by others of the rights of people with disability.
- **Strengthen informal disability advocacy networks and resources:** families and carers have the tools and resources they need to help people in their lives with disability to exercise their rights.
- **Enhance formal disability advocacy services:** formal disability advocacy services are supported and there is greater promotion of the services that already exist.
- **Deliver disability confident and accessible justice and corrections systems:** institutional stakeholders in the justice and corrections systems understand and respond to the issues faced by people with disability and legislation and policy protects the rights of people with disability.
- **Deliver disability confident and accessible police, fire and emergency services:** staff throughout police, fire and emergency services are equipped with the training, resources, and operational practices they need to effectively support people with disability.
- **Support eligible Territorians to access services and the NDIS:** all eligible people with disability can access services and the NDIS regardless of where they live.

“There needs to be better education on the rights and needs of people with disability.”

“We need to strengthen advocacy services and widely advertise them -most people (including me until recently) are not aware that they even exist.”

“The NDIS is enabling me to live a much safer and comfortable life.”

– Consultation participants

Outcome 2: People with disability are included and can engage, participate and contribute to community life

What success looks like

“I feel welcome, included and part of my community.”

“I participate, contribute and make choices about how I lead my life.”

– Consultation participants

Why this is important

Community attitudes have a big impact on the lives of people with disability. Negative attitudes can impact the way people find meaningful employment, learn at school and build personal relationships. Discrimination and low expectations cause people to feel bad about themselves and can damage mental health and wellbeing.¹¹ In 2018, at least 1,600 people with disability in the NT reported experiencing discrimination. These negative attitudes also often intersect with other negative attitudes, for example, around age, gender or race, resulting in ‘double disadvantage’.¹²

Positive community attitudes create an inclusive and safe society where people with disability feel welcomed to equally

participate in the community. Changing community attitudes is complicated and will take time.¹³ School is where many children are exposed naturally to (other) people with disability and develop attitudes they can carry through life. People with disability say that increased awareness and visibility of the needs and lives of people with disability will play a big role in improving community attitudes.

It takes more than just positive attitudes to create a truly inclusive community. Positive actions also need to be taken to make sure people are included. Sports clubs, tourism facilities, arts and cultural institutions, entertainment venues and recreation organisations all have a role to play to change the way they operate to ensure anyone can participate.

There is also an important role for culturally appropriate advocacy and disability services which recognise the cultural identity of Aboriginal people with disability, given the important role they play in providing holistic and culturally safe supports to Aboriginal people with disability.¹⁴





Our priorities

- Address barriers to participation in social, recreation, sporting, arts, cultural events and activities:** social attitudes will welcome and include people with disability of all ages in community life and people with disability can access social, recreation, sporting, arts, cultural events and other activities with ease.
- Support community services to be disability confident and inclusive:** sometimes people with disability miss out on services because those providing them don't understand how to respond to needs. Supporting organisations to understand how to adapt services to the varied need of people with disability will improve access to services.
- Increase the community's visibility, understanding and acceptance of people with disability:** community attitudes will shift over time as disability is de-mystified and normalised. Visibility of people with disability in positions of leadership, achievement and participation is an important contributor. Schools will play an important role in forming inclusive attitudes.
- Recognise and promote the role of carers:** carers will have the tools, resources, and assistance they need to help them in supporting people with disability.

“I think there should be more services for kids who are school aged to socialise, undertake activities and practice their play skills in a supported environment.”

“There needs to be more support for sports clubs to become inclusive.”

“Talk in language.”

– Consultation participants

Outcome 3: People with disability can access the places, information and services they need

What success looks like

“I feel like my community was designed around my needs.”

“I can access the information and services I need to live my life the way I choose.”

– Consultation participants

Why this is important

People with disability in the NT continue to experience basic barriers to accessing their community. There is a ‘critical undersupply’ of social housing in the NT¹⁵ which particularly impacts Aboriginal people with disability and those in rural and remote communities.¹⁶ There is new public infrastructure still being developed that does not meet national and local accessibility standards and codes. People with disability, including Aboriginal people, say they need greater involvement in the co-design of public spaces, housing and infrastructure from the start.

Accessible transport is also an ongoing challenge with 30 per cent of people with disability in Australia having had difficulty or inability using some or all forms of public transport,¹⁷ and passenger transport in remote areas of the Territory being inadequate.¹⁸

Public information needs to be accessible so that people with disability can participate in society. Ensuring audio or verbal communication is available in written text, having Easy Read, Auslan or captioning for those who need it is critical.¹⁹

Technology will play a greater role in making the lives easier for people with disability over the next 10 years, but it is not the only solution. While access to telehealth and telepractice has seen improved access to services for many people, connectivity to internet, particularly in remote areas in the Territory, continues to be an issue.

These access barriers can be challenging to solve, but important to get right as they have flow-on effects. For example, barriers to accessing transport can reduce access to healthcare,²⁰ and inability to communicate effectively can result in underreporting of neglect in the health system.²¹

The benefits of the Territory’s investment in the NDIS are limited by the challenges of ensuring a choice of quality service providers across the Territory, particularly in remote locations. Effort will be required to overcome workforce constraints, including the recruitment and retention of qualified and passionate staff, comprising of Aboriginal staff. Addressing shortages of suitable service infrastructure and building the cultural competence of service providers (including increased provision by Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations) will also be essential.





“Building design and fit-out needs to go beyond ramps instead of stairs. We need to think about how the many types of disability can affect people.”

“Telehealth has been really helpful to access interstate support services given the lack of providers and services in the NT.”

“[We need] to consult with people with lived experience when building public buildings – and consult with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to design suitable housing.”

– Consultation participants

Our priorities

- **Increase the availability of housing that meets universal design principles:** people with disability can live in a home that meets their needs and budget and are not at risk of homelessness.
- **Ensure universal design in public places and buildings:** new and existing public spaces and buildings are designed in line with national and local accessibility standards and codes.
- **Enhance the accessibility of transport options:** transport options are appropriate and available, including people outside Darwin.
- **Support access to technology that improves peoples lives:** people with disability have access to tools and technology which promote their independence and improve their quality of life.
- **Improve the accessibility of public information and communications:** public communications are designed in line with national and local accessibility standards.
- **Increase the choice of quality, culturally competent disability service providers across the Territory:** a strong local disability workforce of skilled, local workers, an enhanced role for Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations in the provision of disability services; culturally competent disability services; choice of services in rural and remote areas so that living outside of Darwin doesn't pose a disadvantage in terms of accessing services.

Outcome 4: People with disability have the skills and opportunities to participate in the economy and be financially secure

What success looks like

“I can see an attractive training or employment pathway for myself when I leave school.”

“As an employer, I see the benefits to my business, and am confident in employing people with disability.”

– Consultation participants

Why this is important

Education, training, and economic participation (including employment, volunteering, work experience, learning new skills, and parenting or caring) are important ingredients of autonomy and social inclusion. Education is the foundation for individuals to improve their own economic position, contribute to society, and for informed participation in social life. Students with disability advance when they are in an inclusive education setting that helps them to learn and grow, where possible in an integrated setting alongside their peers. However, Australians with disability have reduced access to education due to enrolment barriers, limited opportunities for development, a lack of reasonable adjustments, and low expectations.²²

The move from school to employment is a critical transition and it is an uncertain time for most young people. People with disability, their families and carers told us that they are worried about the lack of opportunities available to their children after school. There needs to be more support in the Territory to help students work out their next steps after school and help them realise their ambitions.

The barriers for people living with disability finding employment are currently under the spotlight through the Disability Royal Commission. People with disability in the workforce receive less than half the income of their peers without disability, are twice as likely to be unemployed as their peers,²³ and 45 per cent of people with disability live at near or below the poverty line.²⁴

The private sector can play an important role alongside the public sector and people with disability to create exciting new training and employment opportunities. Support for employers to help them be disability confident is essential to increase the employment of people with disability.





Our priorities

- **Provide education that meets an individual's lifelong learning needs:** people with disability have access to inclusive schools, training and education settings that meet their lifelong learning needs.
- **Expand options for young people with disability transitioning from school to employment or other forms of economic participation:** people with disability leave school with a clear training, employment or other pathway to realise their ambitions.
- **Increase the employment of people with disability:** more people with disability have secure, long term and meaningful employment. Employers, policymakers, and people with disability collaborate to generate employment for people with disability and value for their employers.
- **Support employers to be disability confident:** employers understand the value of prospective employees with disability, and are not hesitant to hire them and make reasonable adjustments where needed.

“I see the need for more schools that can cater for students living with disabilities.”

“[My life would be better if] people actually saw what an asset I am, despite the chair, or even with the chair, they would find me a valuable worker.”

“There needs to be a stronger focus on the rights of employees with disability and the obligations of employers.”

– Consultation participants

Outcome 5: People with disability’s health and wellbeing is supported

What success looks like

“Health professionals understand my needs, and I get the care I need.”

“As a health professional, I understand the needs of patients with disability, and have the tools, knowledge and resources to meet those needs appropriately.”

– Consultation participants

Why this is important

Health is a fundamental human right, and access to health services is imperative to the livelihood of all people including people with disability. People with disability experience poorer health than people without disability, and often face challenges getting the care they need.²⁵

People with disability in the NT face several barriers to quality health outcomes. Many are a result of communication issues due to language barriers, a failure to use the appropriate tools with someone who may need communication assistance, or failure to communicate with a patient directly.

Often, poor outcomes arise from a failure to identify disability early. A significant proportion of disability occurs through a lack of

early intervention. Throughout the community consultation process the families and carers of people with disability stressed the importance of early intervention in schools and other settings. Failure to provide an early individualised response creates more complicated needs later.

Many of these challenges are compounded by broader issues in the Territory health system, such as generalised challenges of delivering effective health services to remote communities, the high turnover of health staff and transient nature of patients in regional centres interrupting continuity of care.²⁶ At the interface of health and the NDIS, people with disability often report frustration accessing help due to the way in which someone’s

condition may be attributed either to their disability or to a general health condition, forcing them to navigate the health system without their NDIS supports.²⁷

Health services and professionals should recognise the important role they play in the lives of people with disability and ensure that their practices are inclusive, accessible, and contribute to the best possible health outcomes for their patients with disability.





Our priorities

- Deliver disability confident, inclusive and accessible health services:** health services understand the health needs and challenges of people with disability and adopt practices which ensure these are addressed.
- Increase access to health education and prevention supports:** people in the community, with or without disability, recognise disability and can support people with disability and their families or carers.
- Enhance early identification of disability and referral to early intervention services:** health and education professionals
 - have the training and resources to identify disability at the earliest opportunity in a person's life and have the tools and resources to support people with disability, carers and families to improve understanding and quality of life.
- Support all services to work together to improve a person's health outcomes:** health services understand that the health needs of someone with disability are best supported holistically, and these services have the tools and resources they need to manage those needs holistically.



“A major issue in the education system is the lack of access to diagnostic services for children who may be autistic, ADHD, or otherwise neuro-divergent.”

“A disability invokes mental health issues through segregation, ostracism and discrimination.”

“There is a lack of allied health available to support my disability.”

– Consultation participants

Accountability mechanisms

Governance

Three consecutive, three-year action plans will cover the life of the Strategy and implement the key priorities. The first action plan: Northern Territory Disability Strategy Action Plan 2022–2025 (the Action Plan), has been released alongside this Strategy.

All NT Government agencies will embed their commitments under the Strategy and Action Plan into agency and business plans.

The NT Minister for Disabilities will oversee implementation of the Strategy. The NTDAC will monitor progress and provide advice to the Minister on key issues regarding implementation of the Strategy. The NTDAC is a non-statutory advisory group to the Minister of Disabilities and represents the voice of people with lived experience of disability.

Monitoring and reporting

Northern Territory Government agency representatives will meet quarterly to discuss, monitor and report on the progress of initiatives under the Action Plan.

The Department will work with government agencies and other stakeholders (where appropriate) to provide annual progress reports to the Minister and NTDAC. The annual reports will be published on the Department’s website and will include updates on progress against key actions, updates on program initiatives, and reporting against the outcome measures associated with the Strategy.

Review and evaluation

The first Action Plan will develop an outcomes framework for the Strategy. This includes identifying key indicators and the required

data sets to be collected against for the five outcome areas. This is an essential first step to measuring progress against the Strategy.

The process to develop the second action plan will begin in 2024 in consultation with government agencies, people with disability, the disability sector and other stakeholders. This second action plan will reflect progress against key actions of the first Action Plan, key changes in the external environment as well as the Territory’s response to recommendations made by the Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People with Disability at the end of 2023.

How you can be involved

This is only the beginning of the conversation. Implementing the Strategy will require significant collaboration between the government, the community, the private sector, people with disability, their families, and carers among others.

Organisations are encouraged to formalise their commitments and actions that align with this Strategy by contacting the Office of Disability, Department of Territory Families, Housing and Communities so that they can be included in future reporting against the Action Plan, and in future action plans.

The Office of Disability, Department of Territory Families, Housing and Communities can be contact via email at: OfficeofDisability.TFHC@nt.gov.au



Thank you

Thank you to everyone who has contributed to the development of the Northern Territory Disability Strategy 2022 – 2032. The feedback you provided in the many online submissions, survey responses, interviews, and workshops has been heard and valued. Your time and honesty in sharing your stories is greatly appreciated and these stories have been the foundation for the development of this Strategy.



Notes and references

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² Note that due to methodology limitations of the Australian Bureau of Statistics' Survey of Disability, Ageing and Carers (SDAC), the number of people with disability in the NT is likely an underestimate. Estimated disability prevalence of 11.6 per cent (more than 1 in 9) reflects 20,500 people with disability as a proportion of the population covered by the SDAC.

³ NDIS Quarterly Report to disability ministers, page 735. (31 March 2022)

⁴ NDIS Quarterly Report to disability ministers, page 679. (31 March 2022)

⁵ Northern Territory NDIS Monthly Performance Dashboard. (31 March 2022)

⁶ NDIS Quarterly Report to disability ministers, page 675. (31 March 2022)

⁷ Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People with Disability, *Overview of responses to the Criminal Justice System Issues Paper*, page 2. (2020)

⁸ Australian Bureau of Statistics, Disability, Ageing and Carers, *Australia: Summary of Findings*, (2015), Catalogue number 4430.0, (20 April 2017).

⁹ Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People with Disability, *Overview of responses to the Criminal Justice System Issues Paper*, page 3. (2020)

¹⁰ Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People with Disability, *Issues Paper: Rights and Attitudes*, page 3; Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, opened for signature 30 March 2007, 999 UNTS 3 (entered into force 3 May 2008), see for example arts 4(3), 29(b)(ii) and 33(3). (2020)

¹¹ Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People with Disability, *Issues Paper: Rights and Attitudes*, page 3. (2020)

¹² Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People with Disability, *Interim Report*, page 369. (October 2020)

¹³ Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People with Disability, *Interim Report*, page 368. (October 2020)

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¹⁵ Department of Local Government, Housing and Community Development, *A Home for all Territorians: Northern Territory Housing Strategy 2020-2025*, page 9. (2019)

¹⁶ Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People with Disability, *Interim Report*, page 400. (October 2020)

¹⁷ Disability, Ageing and Carers, *Australia: Summary of Findings*, Table 19.3. (2018)

¹⁸ Department of Infrastructure, Planning and Logistics, *Remote Community Transport Guiding Principles and Tools*, (February 2019)

¹⁹ Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People with Disability, *Interim Report*, page 382. (October 2020)

²⁰ Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People with Disability, *Interim Report*, page 383. (October 2020)

²¹ Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People with Disability, *Interim Report*, page 391. (October 2020)

²² Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People with Disability, *Interim Report*, page 394. (October 2020)

²³ Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People with Disability, *Employment Issues paper*, page 3. (May 2020)

²⁴ Price Waterhouse Coopers, Disability expectations – *Investing in a better life, a stronger Australia*, (2011)

²⁵ Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People with Disability, *Interim Report*, page 26. (October 2020)

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²⁷ Northern Territory Office of the Public Guardian, Submission to the Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People with Disability: *Health Care for People with Cognitive Disability Issues Paper*, (March 2020)





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