# Disability Action Plan 2015 – 2019

National Disability Services welcomes comments and feedback on its Disability Action Plan.

Email [**dap@nds.org.au**](mailto:dap@nds.org.au)

Copies of this Disability Action Plan are available at **www.nds.org.au**

Copies are also available in alternative formats on request. Email **dap@nds.org.au**

## Chief Executive’s Message

NDS’s inaugural Disability Action Plan ran for the period 2010– 2014 and represented the beginning of our journey to be an organisation that lives and breathes our commitment to practices that eliminate discrimination and remove barriers to participation and access for people with disability.

As the peak body for disability service providers, NDS strives to demonstrate best practice and continuous improvement.

This DAP celebrates our current achievements, incorporates lessons from our first DAP and identifies new commitments that will be undertaken over the next four years.

We look forward to implementing the actions associated with these commitments and ultimately delivering on NDS’s commitment to promote the participation of people with disability in all domains of life.

Ken Baker

Chief Executive

National Disability Services

## NDS Overview and Context

NDS is the national industry association for disability services, representing approximately 1,000 non-government organisations.

It promotes quality service provision and life opportunities for Australians with disability through the provision of information, representation and policy advice. NDS’s members range in size from small support groups to large multi-service organisations and are located in every State and Territory across Australia.

NDS has a national office in Canberra and offices in every State and Territory, enabling it to respond to members’ issues at either State/Territory or national level. The organisation as a whole is governed by a board which includes the elected chair from each State/Territory Division, as well as representatives elected directly by members. State Committees composed of elected representatives set strategic priorities for each State or Territory Division.

## Purpose

The purpose of the NDS DAP 2015 – 2019 is to outline the strategies and actions that NDS will undertake over the next four years to eliminate discrimination and improve access, inclusion and participation for people with disability within the organisation and the services it delivers.

Our inaugural DAP was developed in 2010 and we are proud of the outcomes we have achieved so far. These achievements are documented in more detail from page 11.

Developed in consultation with NDS staff with disability and those with expertise in disability access issues, our DAP 2015 – 2019 aims to build upon actions that have already been undertaken. The emphasis is on continuous improvement to remove physical, communication and attitudinal barriers that may exist.

## Policy Context and Framework

There are a number of legislative requirements, regulations and policies that guide organisations in relation to matters of disability. Development of the Disability Action Plan ensures compliance with the relevant legislation and regulations and demonstrates NDS’s commitment to the protection of the rights of NDS stakeholders.

## National context

The Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (DDA) makes it unlawful to discriminate on the basis of disability.

The objects of the Disability Discrimination Act are:

1. To eliminate as far as possible discrimination against person on the grounds of disability in the areas of work, accommodation, education, access to premises, clubs and sport; and the provision of goods, facilities, services and land: existing laws; and the administration of Commonwealth laws and programs;

and

1. To ensure as far as practicable that persons with a disability have the same rights to equality before law as the rest of the community;

and

1. To promote recognition and acceptance within the community of the principle that persons with disability have the same fundamental rights as the rest of the community.

The DDA recognises that people with disability have the same fundamental rights as other people and should have equal opportunity to participate in community life.

On 1 July 2013 the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) commenced in four trial sites.

The NDIS will transform the way people with disability, their families and carers are supported in Australia. The NDIS is a person-centred support system, which will greatly expand access to disability support.

## Global context

Australia has ratified the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and its Optional Protocol.

The Convention marks a "paradigm shift" in attitudes and approaches to persons with disabilities. It takes to a new height the movement from viewing persons with disabilities as "objects" of charity, medical treatment and social protection towards viewing persons with disabilities as "subjects" with rights, who are capable of claiming those rights and making decisions for their lives based on free and informed consent as well as being active members of society.

## Guiding Principles of the Convention

The eight guiding principles underlying The Convention and each one of its specific articles are:

1. Respect for inherent dignity, individual autonomy including the freedom to make one’s own choices and independence of persons
2. Non discrimination
3. Full and effective participation and inclusion in society
4. Respect for difference and acceptance of persons with disabilities as part of human diversity and humanity
5. Equality of opportunity
6. Accessibility
7. Equality between men and women
8. Respect for the evolving capacities of children with disabilities and respect for the right of children with disabilities to preserve their identities.

## Linking and Supporting: NDS Strategic Directions

Matters related to disability, access and inclusion do not operate in isolation; rather, they permeate every aspect of NDS’s business. The Disability Action Plan is therefore, linked to other organisational strategies and plans.

The Disability Action Plan was developed with careful consideration and alignment to the NDS Strategic Directions and Ends Policy. The Strategic Directions have been reviewed in 2010 with the integration of the Disability Action Plan integral to this process.

As part of reviewing the NDS strategic directions NDS updated its corporate values and purpose. The purpose of NDS is to promote quality service provision and life opportunities for people with disability.

NDS now includes amongst its values, ensuring that the interests and rights of people with disability are at the core of our decision-making.

## An Employee’s Perspective – Sue O’Neill

To say Sue O’Neill enjoys her work at NDS would be an understatement: in her own words, she “couldn’t be happier”.  
  
“I’m very relieved to still be working here, particularly after having to take that extended leave – it just shows what a great organisation NDS is.

Sue joined NDS as an Administration Officer in July 2008 and describes her role as “varied and interesting”. Her tasks involve data entry, online research and any other administration duties that may arise. “The things I really love doing are the research and – believe it or not – database work,” Sue laughs.

She adds she is “extremely excited about the NDIS launch sites happening and the eventual full rollout of the NDIS”.

When Sue, who has spina bifida, joined NDS she was walking on crutches. For the past two years, she has been using a wheelchair because she has arthritis in both knees. “I just thought it was better for me to stop walking, because of the pressure it

put on my knees,” she says.

It is important that Sue has a desk wide enough to allow her to get in and out easily, and an adjustable keyboard table. Sue says: “I always had a particular desk, but it is even more beneficial for me now.” The NDS office in Victoria is on the 10th floor of the Melbourne building, but Sue can reach the lift buttons from her wheelchair. She now has an attendant carer who, she says, might press the buttons, “or someone in the lift going to another floor might press them as well”.

Following extended time off due to illness, Sue recently returned to work with the full support of the State Manager and Victorian office team. Sue says: “I couldn’t be happier to work at NDS in Victoria, where I feel very much a part of the team!”

Celebrating our Success:   
Outcomes from DAP 2010 – 2014  
  
Recruitment Process:

The recruitment process has been analysed to ensure that no barriers exist for candidates with disability. For example, all position descriptions state that NDS is an Equal Opportunity Employer and encourages applications from people with disability and the New Employee Personal Details form includes a Request for Workplace Modifications.

* Reasonable workplace modifications and adjustments have been made for all employees with disability as requested.
* A survey has been conducted to measure the employment and retention rates of people with disability. The survey looked at all stages of the recruitment process as well as ongoing employment with NDS. The results were positive and will act as a benchmark for an annual survey.
* An Accessibility Policy has been released which contains recruitment accessibility guidelines.

Learning and Development:

* A survey has been conducted to ascertain disability knowledge and competency amongst staff. The results are being used to develop programs to increase staff awareness.
* An Understanding Disability fact sheet has been incorporated into the Orientation Pack for all new NDS employees.
* An Accessibility Policy has been released which contains a resource page listing Disability Awareness Training providers throughout Australia.

Accessible Infrastructure:

* All NDS offices that have been relocated or renovated meet minimum accessibility standards.
* An Accessibility Policy has been released which contains guidelines for all new premises and/or renovations to NDS offices.

Communications:

* The NDS Style Guide has been updated to meet accessibility standards.
* All communication activities both internal and external have been reviewed, resulting in: Braille accessible business cards for staff and accessible email content and signatures for staff.
* All NDS websites have been audited for Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.0compliance with national websites meeting A or AA standard.
* All NDS Communications staff have been externally trained in accessible communications.
* Internal workshops on preparing accessible documents are regularly held and open to all NDS staff.
* An Accessibility Policy has been released which contains communication accessibility guidelines.

Product and Services:

* NDS entered into a service agreement with the Australian Federation of Deaf Societies (AFDS) in May 2013. The agreement states that AFDS shall be the preferred supplier of Auslan/English interpreters for all NDS interpreting requirements nationally.
* NDS co-hosted with Carers Australia and the Australian Federation of DisabilityOrganisations (AFDO) Australia’s largest Disability and Carer Congress in 2011. This landmark event attracted over 1,000 delegates consisting of people with disability, carers, families and service providers. Many participation requirements i.e. captioning, interpreters, attendant carers, hoists, hearing loops etc. were organised. The captioning technology used at this conference was the first of its kind in Australia.
* NDS hosts up to 10 national conferences and events annually and works with some of Australia’s leading venues to improve their disability systems and accessibility.
* Where possible, all NDS printed material is printed by Australian Disability Enterprises (ADEs).
* An Accessibility Policy has been released which contains guidelines and checklist for NDS events.

Governance and Accountability:

* Our inaugural DAP was launched and aligned with NDS Strategic Directions.
* A DAP Committee was convened and regularly reports to the NDS Board, senior management team and employees regarding progress.

## NDS Disability Action Plan’s Key Priority Areas 2015-2019

1. Recruitment Process
2. Learning and Development
3. Accessible Infrastructure
4. Communication
5. Products and services
6. Governance and Accountability

### Recruitment Process

**Main Objective:** Improve attraction, recruitment, engagement and retention of people with disability at NDS

1. **What will we do?**

Development of programs to support our employment of people with disability  
**a) Performance Indicators:**

Research government grants or schemes to support workplace adjustments to increase accessibility

**b) Who?**Human Resources Manager and DAP Committee **c) By when?**Ongoing

1. **What will we do?**

Ensure employment materials are available in accessible formats upon request

1. **Performance Indicators:**

Availability of accessible versions is promoted in all position advertising

1. **Who?**Human Resources Manager
2. **By when?**Ongoing
3. **What will we do?**

Include a statement in all employment materials that NDS will make reasonable adjustments to accommodate employees with disability

1. **Performance Indicators:**

Statement included in all employment material

1. **Who?**Human Resources Manager
2. **By when?**Ongoing
3. **What will we do?**Research government grants or schemes to support workplace adjustments to increase accessibility
4. **Performance Indicators:**Discussions held with relevant government agencies and communicated to NDS recruiting managers
5. **Who?**Human Resources Manager
6. **By when?**30 June 2015
7. **What will we do?**Research employment opportunities such as internships and traineeships to provide entry-level employment opportunities for people with disability
8. **Performance Indicators:**Discussions held with relevant organisations and communicated to Senior Management team
9. **Who?**Senior Management team and Human Resources Manager
10. **By when?**30 June 2015
11. **What will we do?**

Include current DAP in new starter orientation pack

1. **Performance Indicators:**New employees receive DAP
2. **Who?**Human Resources Manager
3. **By when?**Ongoing
4. **What will we do?**

Research student placement opportunities for people with disability

1. **Performance Indicators:**

Discussions held with relevant organisations and communicated to Senior Management team

1. **Who?**Senior Management team and Human Resources Manager
2. **By when?**30 June 2015
3. **What will we do?**Support requests from applicants and employees with disability for reasonable workplace adjustments and/or flexibility
4. **Performance Indicators:**100% approval rate of reasonable workplace adjustments and/or flexibility requests
5. **Who?**Senior Management team and Human Resources Manager
6. **By when?**Ongoing
7. **What will we do?**

Schedule three month follow up with new employees with disability to discuss their recruitment and induction experience and use this feedback to improve processes

1. **Performance Indicators:**Schedule developed for follow up and information provided recorded and analysed
2. **Who?**Senior Management team and Human Resources Manager
3. **By when?**Ongoing
4. **What will we do?**

Consult with Disability Employment Services (DES) providers using learnings to develop best practice in accessible and inclusive employment

**Performance Indicators:**Discussions held and learnings incorporated into NDS processes

1. **Who?**Human Resources Manager
2. **By when?**31 December 2015
3. **What will we do?**

Increase the number of people with a disability within the NDS workforce from 10% to 15%

1. **Performance Indicators:**Annual survey of employees with disability reaches or exceeds this target
2. **Who?**Senior Management team,Human Resources Manager and DAP Committee
3. **By when?**30 June 2016

### Learning and Development:

**Main Objective:** Build upon current disability awareness initiatives to ensure NDS staff are equipped with relevant awareness, knowledge, attitudes and skills about the disability sector, DDA, disabilities, supporting people with disability, human rights convention and charters

1. **What will we do?**

Develop a program to provide NDS employees with opportunities to visit member organisations and member organisations an opportunity to present at NDS offices

**a) Performance Indicators:**

Staff advised of program and participation rate of 50%

**b) Who?**Senior Management Team, Human Resources Manager  **c) By when?**31 December 2015

1. **What will we do?**

Develop an induction program that incorporates new employee attendance at an NDS workshop/program aimed at disability awareness eg. projectable

**a) Performance Indicators:**

100% participation rate of new employees

**b) Who?**Human Resources Manager  **c) By when?**31 December 2015

1. **What will we do?**

Conduct annual employee survey to measure understanding of disability access and inclusion

**a) Performance Indicators:**

Comparison of results yearky indicates increased awareness and inclusion

**b) Who?**DAP Committee

**c) By when?**31 December 2015, then annually

### Accessible Infrastructure:

**Main Objective:** Ensure a process of continual improvement across all NDS offices and infrastructure to increase accessibility

1. **What will we do?**

Conduct an accessibility assessment of all NDS facilities against the NDS Premises guidelines

**a) Performance Indicators:**

100% completion

**b) Who?**State Managers  
 **c) By when?**31 December 2015

1. **What will we do?**

Identify and resolve ‘gaps’ in accessibility at sites where it is reasonably practicable to do so.

**a) Performance Indicators:**

80% of NDS premises meet NDS Premises guidelines

**b) Who?**State Managers  
 **c) By when?**31 December 2016

1. **What will we do?**

Conduct annual workplace inspections of all NDS offices to ensure office and meeting room layouts are accessible.

**a) Performance Indicators:**  
Schedule developed and 100% completion of scheduled inspections.

**b) Who?**State Managers  
 **c) By when?**31 December 2015 then annually

1. **What will we do?**

Consider the NDS Premises guidelines when considering alternative office sites

**Performance Indicators:**All new sites meet the NDS Premises guidelines

**b) Who?**Senior Management team

**c) By when?**As required

1. **What will we do?**

Consult an access expert whenever office renovations are planned

**a) Performance Indicators:**All renovated NDS offices meet the NDS Premises guidelines

**b) Who?**Senior Management team

**c) By when?**As required

1. **What will we do?**

Review the NDS Premises guidelines annually to ensure changes in legislation are captured

**a)** **Performance Indicators:**Annual review conducted and amendments incorporated

**b) Who?**DAP Committee

**c) By when?**31 December 2015, then annually

### Communication:

**Main Objective:** Continue to improve the accessibility of NDS information to internal and external stakeholders.

1. **What will we do?**

NDS website, News Updates and publications are accessible and aim to meet industry best practice

**a) Performance Indicators:**

100% compliance with NDS Communications Guidelines

**b) Who?**General Manager Communications   
 **c) By when?**Ongoing

1. **What will we do?**

Ensure all web content is Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.0 AA compliant working towards all web content being AAA compliant.

**a) Performance Indicators:**

100% AA Compliance in external audit

**b) Who?**General Manager Communications   
 **c) By when?**31 December 2016

**3)What will we do?**Ensure our Staff Intranet is accessible

**a) Performance Indicators:**

100% Compliance with NDS Communications Guidelines

**b) Who?**General Manager Communications and Human Resource Manager  
 **c) By when?**31 December 2015

**4) What will we do?**

All NDS documents will be available in other formats when requested

**a) Performance Indicators:**

Requests recorded in a register to measure 100% compliance

**b) Who?**General Manager Communications

**c) By when?**Ongoing

### Products and Services:

**Main Objective:** Continue to reduce barriers to people with disability in accessing NDS products and services while supporting employment opportunities for people with disability.

1. **What will we do?**

Give preference to suppliers that provide employment opportunities for people with Disability

**a) Performance Indicators:**

Preferred supplier list provided

**b) Who?**Senior Management team  
 **c) By when?**30 June 2015, then ongoing

**2) What will we do?**Ensure our meetings and events are held in accessible venues

**a) Performance Indicators:**

100% compliance with NDS Meeting and Events Guidelines

**b) Who?**Senior Management team and Conferences and Events Manager  
 **c) By when?**Ongoing

1. **What will we do?**

Auslan/English interpreters, captioning, hearing loops and other supports will be made available for NDS events upon request

**a) Performance Indicators:**

All requests actioned

**b) Who?**Senior Management team   
 **c) By when?**Ongoing

1. **What will we do?**All NDS conferences and events will accept the Companion Card
2. **Performance Indicators:**   
   Companion Card holder attendance

**b) Who?**Conferences & Events Manager  
 **c) By when?**Ongoing

1. **What will we do?**Develop a Complaints Policy that is accessible to people with disability
2. **Performance Indicators:**   
   Publicly available accessible Complaints Policy

**b) Who?**General Manager Corporate Services   
 **c) By when?**30 June 2015

### Governance and Accountability:

1. **What will we do?**Ensure key actions of the DAP are integrated into broader operational plans
2. **Performance Indicators:**   
   Launch of NDS’s 2nd DAP and listing of the DAP as a quarterly agenda item forthe Senior Management team
3. **b) Who?**Senior Management team and DAP Committee
4. **By when?**31 January 2015
5. **What will we do?**Continue to celebrate our DAP achievements across the business
6. **Performance Indicators:**   
   Regular NDS Staff Updates on DAP activities
7. **Who?**DAP Committee
8. **By when?**Ongoing
9. **What will we do?**The DAP Committee continues to be effective
10. **Performance Indicators:**   
    DAP Committee will meet regularly to monitor and review progress
11. **Who?**DAP Committee
12. **By when?**Ongoing

### Monitoring and Evaluating our progress

Our DAP Committee will meet regularly to monitor and review our progress. Our DAP is a working document and under constant review to meet changing demands. Our progress will be reported annually to the NDS Board.