

National Disability Services NSW Election Platform

National Disability Services (NDS), Australia's peak body for non-government disability service organisations, calls on all parties and candidates for the 2023 NSW state election to support initiatives that will progress genuine inclusion for people with a disability in NSW.

NDS calls on state political parties to commit to a proactive agenda that strengthens the disability support sector and improves the way the NSW Government works with the community across government agencies, so that a disability does not have to be a barrier for people living in NSW.

We call on parties and candidates to support the federal NDIS Review and eliminate the duplication of effort in dual reporting faced by providers that detracts from delivering an efficient system of supports.

NDS ask that the candidates and political parties commit to actions across the following four areas of most need:

1. Workforce

There is a severe shortage of workers across the sector. This shortage is expected to grow significantly. The NDIS National Workforce Plan identifies that the national demand for workers expected to increase by 31 per cent by 2024. Coupled with this is a high rate of turnover of workers in the sector (greater than 17 per cent) that places added pressure on the capacity to provide support to people most in need.

We ask that political parties commit to ensuring that people with disabilities have access to a resilient disability support sector and skilled workforce by:

- Funding strategies and actions to promote careers in the NSW disability sector to address key workforce shortages
- Investment into the retention of a skilled disability workforce.

2. Housing

Current housing strategies are not meeting the needs of people with disability. There needs to be intensive collaboration with stakeholders to develop creative solutions to fill the demand. People with disability are a significant and increasing cohort of public housing tenants. As stated in a special NSW Ombudsman's report into disability housing (2022), of the

167,321 tenants in public housing, 35,543 (approximately 21 per cent) are known to have a disability that could affect their tenancy needs. Up to 34 per cent of tenants receive a disability support pension. To meet the housing requirements people with disability and their families (whether they are NDIS participants or not) will require increased investment in accessible and affordable housing.

We ask that political parties commit to providing access to suitable housing through:

- ensuring that suitable state-owned housing is available to people with disability
- investment in appropriate disability specific housing responses
- ensuring that people who are not eligible for NDIS accommodation supports have access to appropriate social housing
- making the National Construction Code accessible building guidelines mandatory for new builds.

3. Support for people with a disability outside the NDIS framework

Not all people with disability are eligible for NDIS funded supports. The NDIS reported in June 2022 that approximately 161,000 people in NSW were receiving NDIS funding. From a total of approximately 1.37 million people with disability in NSW, this means less than 12 per cent of people with disability in NSW are receiving NDIS supports.

We ask that political parties commit to developing an effective, integrated social care response for the people with a disability in NSW who are not eligible for the NDIS through:

- collaboration with the NSW disability support sector to better understand the gaps in mainstream supports and implement strategies that will deliver support at a state level to people who fall outside the scope of the NDIS.
- investment in access to mainstream services for people with disability to navigate across the boundaries of health, housing, education and training, and employment.

4. Employment and Economic Participation

People with disability are over-represented in the unemployment statistics. ABS data from 2019 reports that people with disability have a 53.4 per cent workforce participation rate, compared to 84.1 per cent for the general population. Similarly, the unemployment rate for people with disability is 10.3 per cent compared to 4.6 per cent for the general population.

We ask that political parties commit to improve the employment and economic participation opportunities for people with disabilities through:

- targeted NSW government procurement with social enterprises.
- funding the development and implementation of a strategy that improves the access to jobs for people with disability to allow greater participation in the workforce.
- investment in a state-wide activity that actively addresses the barriers to employment of people with disability that exist in the community.