



# State Disability Inclusion Plan

## Consultation Report 2024



## Acknowledgement of Country

The Department of Human Services acknowledges and respects Aboriginal people as the state's first people and recognises Aboriginal people as traditional owners and occupants of lands and waters in South Australia.

We acknowledge that the spiritual, social, cultural and economic practices of Aboriginal people come from their traditional lands and waters, and that the cultural and heritage beliefs, languages and laws are still of importance today.

We are committed to ensuring that the needs and aspirations of Aboriginal people with disability are incorporated in the design, development and implementation of the State Disability Inclusion Plan.

## Language

The Department of Human Services acknowledges that language is a personal preference, and that different language and terminology preferences exist within the disability community. Based on feedback during consultations and for the purposes of this consultation report, we will move between identity-first and person-first language.

The term 'Aboriginal' has been used throughout this document to reference all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. The Department of Human Services acknowledges and respects this preference of the South Australian Aboriginal community in written and spoken language.

This consultation report may contain language that some people find offensive. Whilst every endeavour has been made to minimise this where possible, direct quotes from written submissions have been taken **verbatim**.

When we say '**Respondent**' it means those who provided a written submission and/or response to the YourSAy survey.

When we say '**Participant**' it means those who attended a forum, focus group or one-on-one interview.



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# About this Report

This report summarises the consultation process used, feedback received and key findings from the consultation process held between 9 October 2023 – 3 December 2023.

People with disability across South Australia have shared their ideas about what improvements are needed to the State Disability Inclusion Plan for 2024 and beyond to remove barriers to access and inclusion.

In preparing this report, the Department of Human Services has consolidated responses received through the consultation into key themes.



# Executive Summary

The development and implementation of the first State Disability Inclusion Plan 2019-2023 (the State Plan) was a result of the South Australian Government recognising that a stronger commitment to access and inclusion for people with disability was needed.

It was a significant milestone in advancing inclusivity across South Australia, bringing local and state governments together to foster inclusion and accessibility in new ways.

With 2023 marking the conclusion of the first State Plan, the South Australian Government has commenced the process of identifying the priorities for development of the next four-year State Plan, commencing in 2024.

On 9 October 2023, the South Australian Government launched a Discussion Paper (and an Easy Read version) to support the consultation process.

People with disability, parents and carers, non-government organisations, public sector agencies, local councils and other interested parties were invited to participate and have their voices heard in a range of ways, including:

- completing a YourSAy survey
- submitting a written, video, verbal and/or drawing submission
- contacting the Department of Human Services directly via email
- attending a forum/meeting.

In addition, targeted consultation activities were conducted by:

- JFA Purple Orange
- South Australian Council on Intellectual Disability
- Multicultural Youth South Australia

- KWY
- Aboriginal Family Support Services
- Kari Caring Just for You (consultant).

Suitable supports and resources were provided to ensure accessibility for the audience, including an Easy Read version of the discussion paper.

People with disability across South Australia submitted over 271 responses through either YourSAy or written submission.

This is just the beginning of the consultation process as the South Australian Government looks ahead to develop the next State Plan to achieve our goal of an accessible and inclusive South Australia.



# Emerging themes from the consultation

Feedback from the consultation highlighted that people with disability continue to face significant barriers to equal access and inclusion in South Australia. These barriers have been consolidated into the following themes:

## Understanding the intersectionality and diversity of disability

Improving understanding of the diversity and intersectionality of people with disability was highlighted as a key priority across all areas of the community, including the health sector, education, workforce and justice systems. People with disability come from all walks of life and the disproportionate discrimination they continue to experience across many different areas can have a significant impact on their quality of life.

## Prioritising safety and improving the emergency response and interaction between people with disability and the criminal justice system

Streamlining safeguarding systems and making them easier to navigate were highlighted as key areas for improvement. Ensuring safe interactions with police and custodial staff and addressing challenges faced by people with disability in emergencies highlighted the need for increased understanding and awareness of

disability among workers in these settings. Similar feedback extended to the criminal justice system, to ensure people with disability have the same fundamental rights when coming into contact with the justice system.

## Ensuring positive learning experiences and building capacity within the education sector

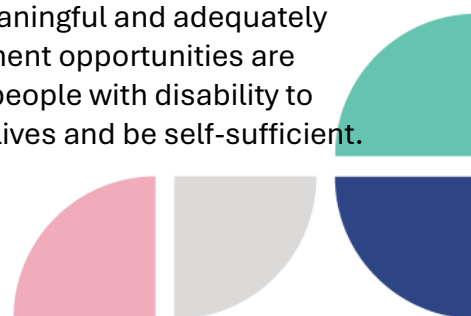
Improving the knowledge, understanding and awareness of disability across our educational settings was noted as a significant area for improvement, with feedback highlighting that school settings must be designed and resourced to support the inclusion of people with disability of all ages across their educational experience and that there should be a shift away from exclusionary strategies.

## Improving public transport and the built environment

People with disability highlighted the challenges they continue to face when attempting to access public transport and the accessibility issues they encounter with public buildings and infrastructure. Having accessible and inclusive places and spaces and a way to get there is vital for people with disability to feel connected to their community.

## Increasing workforce participation and improving financial stability

Access to meaningful and adequately paid employment opportunities are essential for people with disability to lead fulfilling lives and be self-sufficient.



Feedback provided highlighted that businesses must do more to ensure people with disability can succeed in their jobs and see opportunity to grow and develop into leaders.

### **Improving the accessibility of health and mental health supports and services**

People with disability highlighted the challenges they continue to face when attending medical and specialist appointments as well as other health services and supports. These challenges are compounded by a lack of knowledge and understanding of disability by health professionals and the inaccessibility of many health settings.

### **Feeling connected to and belonging to the community**

Feedback was clear that people with disability want to feel connected to their community and be able to participate as equal citizens. All members of the community experience benefits from an inclusive society.

### **Elevating the quality of the next State Plan and Disability Access and Inclusion Plans**

The importance of listening to, collaborating and consulting with people with disability in the design and implementation of the next State Disability Inclusion Plan is crucial to ensuring it is responsive to the needs and aspirations of all people with disability.



# Engagement Summary

During the eight-week consultation period, the South Australian Government engaged with the State's diverse disability community through a range of consultation activities.

## YourSAy responses

A total of 236 responses were received through the YourSAy survey, with just over 52% of Respondents identifying as a person with disability and/or neurodivergence.

Total responses received	<b>236</b>
Total number – people with disability	<b>123* (52.1%)</b>
Total number – people without disability	<b>113* (47.9%)</b>

\* We recognise that there may be people who do not feel comfortable disclosing their disability and that this number may not be representative of the total number of people with disability and/or neurodivergence who completed the YourSAy survey.

Feedback was received from a diverse range of people with disability\*, with Respondents identifying as:

Physical disability	<b>62</b>
Psychosocial disability	<b>29</b>
Neurological disability	<b>24</b>
Deaf or hard of hearing	<b>15</b>
Learning disability	<b>15</b>
Blind or low vision	<b>13</b>
Intellectual disability	<b>10</b>
Other	<b>12</b>

\*Please note that respondents had the option to identify with multiple disability types.

## Written submissions

The disability community were also invited to share their thoughts in a written submission to the Discussion Paper. Thirty-five submissions to the Discussion Paper were received.

Non-government organisations	<b>7</b>
State Government agencies	<b>14</b>
Individual community members	<b>14</b>

It is noted that written submissions reflected similar themes to those arising from the YourSAy responses.

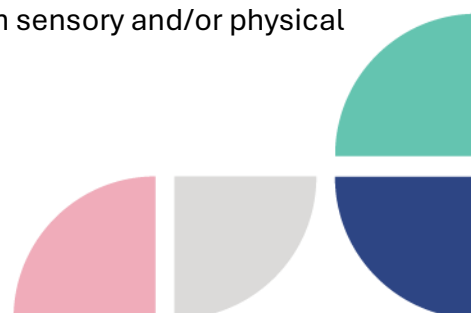
## Targeted consultations

To support the consultation process, the Department of Human Services (DHS) partnered with organisations to utilise their existing disability networks and focus specifically on obtaining feedback from the Priority Groups identified in the Disability Inclusion Act 2018 (SA), these being:

- Aboriginal people with disability
- Culturally and linguistically diverse people with disability
- Women with disability
- Children with disability.

**JFA Purple Orange** engaged with over 100 people with disability, including:

- Young people with disability
- People with disability living in regional and/or remote areas
- Culturally and linguistically diverse people with disability
- People with sensory and/or physical disability.



The **South Australian Council on Intellectual Disability** held six consultations and engaged with 34 people with intellectual disability, including 21 who live in regional South Australia.

**Multicultural Youth South Australia** engaged with 82 people from culturally and linguistically diverse communities, with 40 people identifying as a person with disability and/or neurodivergence. This included 25 participants who were family members and 17 who were carers.

**KWY** conducted one on one interviews with 19 Aboriginal people, 18 who identified as having disability with the remaining Participant indicating they were a family member or friend.

**Kari Caring Just for You (consultant)** conducted targeted interviews with 11 Aboriginal people, four of who identified as having disability and six who were family members.

**Aboriginal Family Support Services** conducted interviews with 15 Aboriginal people, nine who identified as having disability and six who were carers.

Total participants	<b>261</b>
Total participants with disability	<b>205 (78.5%)</b>
Total participants without disability	<b>56 (21.5%)</b>

## DHS-led consultations

DHS conducted a number of activities across the sector, including a dedicated forum in November 2023 with representatives from non-government organisations (NGOs) working in the disability sector. Seventy people attended, including service delivery staff, management and people with lived experience.

In December 2023, DHS also hosted a workshop with Deaf Connect community members, with 10 people attending. Lived-experience was further captured in the process through the following advisory networks:

- Disability Minister’s Advisory Council
- DHS Disability Engagement Group.

Members of these networks were also encouraged to submit a written submission and/or respond to the YourSAy survey.

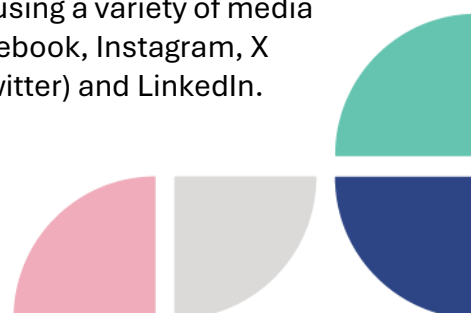
## State authority consultations

Ninety-nine State authorities (South Australian Government agencies and local councils) were invited to participate in the consultation process through the internal Community of Practice (CoP) meetings.

DHS also conducted a targeted consultation with 14 members of the Legatus Group, the local government ambassador and advocate for the Central Local Government Region in South Australia.

## Social media engagement

The consultation was promoted by DHS and YourSAy using a variety of media including Facebook, Instagram, X (previously Twitter) and LinkedIn.





Facebook impressions*	<b>18,743**</b>
Instagram impressions	<b>1,350</b>
X impressions	<b>851</b>
LinkedIn impressions	<b>7,821</b>
Total	<b>28,765</b>

\*Impressions indicate the number of times a post was on screen.

\*\*Data includes 14,821 impressions from two paid Facebook advertisements run during the consultation period.

### Other promotion activities

Email communications were sent to disability sector partners, social service organisations, community members and all State authority Chief Executives, inviting them to take part in the consultation and promote the opportunity to their networks.

In addition, the consultation was promoted on radio and other online media.

## Consultation Feedback

### Theme 1: Diversity and intersectionality of disability

#### Diversity and rights

Throughout the past four years, the intersection between a person’s disability and other forms of structural and systemic discrimination has become increasingly clearer.

Members of culturally and linguistically diverse communities and Aboriginal people with disability continue to

experience significant overlapping barriers to equal access and inclusion.

In addition, the experiences of women and children with disability were raised as significant areas for improvement, with these cohorts often feeling left behind. This sentiment was also echoed by LGBTIQ+ people with disability and those living in regional and remote areas.

It was also highlighted that diversity within disability itself can lead to unfair treatment and exclusion of people with disability, especially those with ‘hidden disabilities’ or those who have acquired their disability later in life.

Participants acknowledged the four priority groups defined within the *Disability Inclusion Act 2018 (SA)* (the Act) and highlighted the need for State Government and local councils to consider how their policies, programs and initiatives can either enhance or diminish their rights.

#### Aboriginal people with disability

Participants highlighted the need for more culturally appropriate supports and services for Aboriginal people with disability and to acknowledge the diversity and experiences of Aboriginal people.

Respondents called for the State Plan to encourage State authorities to adopt the ‘cultural model of inclusion’ which recognises the diversity of cultures, languages, knowledge and beliefs of Aboriginal people in the development and implementation of supports, services, strategies and initiatives.

Furthermore, Respondents raised the need for the State Plan to include ways in which Aboriginal people with disability can have a greater say in how



policies and programs are designed and delivered, by:

- including Aboriginal people with disability in the delivery of culturally appropriate training and education
- addressing the significant levels of inequality across all areas of life – health, education, workforce and social inequality
- understanding the impact colonisation has had on Aboriginal people and the trauma they continue to experience
- streamlining supports and services and moving away from the perceived ‘siloes’ approach.

### **Culturally and linguistically diverse people with disability**

Culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) people with disability raised the ongoing barriers they face when accessing mainstream supports and services and the need for more culturally appropriate and targeted supports that can address their specific needs.

The concept of disability in CALD communities can be significantly different to others in the community. Individuals may face discrimination both from the broader community and within their own communities. To encourage greater participation and acknowledgement of the diversity of CALD people’s experiences, Participants called for:

- diversity in language and communication styles of available information and supports, including the availability of interpreters
- culturally appropriate supports that celebrate cultures, languages and knowledge

- acknowledgement of past traumas leading to an acquired disability, especially those from refugee and migrant communities
- recognition of the important role of families, usually seen as primary caregivers, who may be reluctant to utilise mainstream services
- specific supports and services that address overlapping barriers
- more research, data and evidence-informed practices.

### **Women with disability**

Respondents reported a variety of challenges that should be addressed by the State Plan specific to women with disability, including:

- a lack of understanding and awareness about female-specific health issues and age-related concerns that can often be mistakenly attributed to their disability (or vice-versa)
- the invalidation of diagnosis of women (particularly Autistic women) and the lack of understanding about how disability and/or neurodivergence can present differently
- supports for women with disability who are required to cease medication during pregnancy, which can mean their disability goes unmanaged
- gendered stereotypes and sexist behaviours, especially in the health sector
- workforce participation and the lack of acknowledgement of the qualities women with disability can bring to employers.



## Children with disability

Children and young people with disability highlighted the barriers they face when attempting to participate in community life, especially in local events and activities. Significantly, Respondents highlighted:

- the lack of child-friendly and inclusive events, and instead, tokenistic gestures that offer limited access to facilities and venues
- the fear children and young people with disability face when attempting to participate in community events held in the evening or at night
- the lack of sensory-friendly spaces at local and major events.

***“Children who are deaf are unable to access the same social and community activities as hearing people. This includes everything from the theatre, dance lessons, sports clubs and even access to public buildings like the State Library of South Australia family events like Christmas story time.”***

In addition, Respondents highlighted that access to supports and services specific for children and young people with disability can be limited, and they usually need their parents' or caregivers' permission to use the services that are available.

Respondents called on the State Plan to better address:

- age-related discrimination and the negative effect this can have in later years

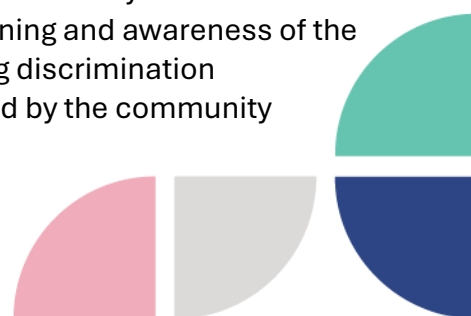
- early intervention supports and services that are tailored for children and young people with disability
- better integration of children and young people in the design of policies, programs and initiatives that affect them
- a life-span perspective, with a focus on supporting key transitions during childhood and through adolescence to adulthood
- the importance of emphasising the key articles of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.

## LGBTIQA+ people with disability

Respondents advocated for stronger supports and services that improve the overall health, wellbeing, inclusion and rights of LGBTIQA+ people with disability.

Although LGBTIQA+ people with disability are not currently defined by the Act as a priority group, the specific needs of, and discrimination experienced by, this community must be addressed in the development and implementation of policies, programs and initiatives that seek to enhance access and inclusion. Participants highlighted the disproportionate rates of exclusion and discrimination experienced by LGBTIQA+ people with disability and called for:

- acknowledgement, recognition and prioritisation of LGBTIQA+ people with disability within the State Plan
- capacity-building strategies and resourcing to improve supports and services provided to LGBTIQA+ people with disability
- greater training and awareness of the overlapping discrimination experienced by the community



- acknowledgement of LGBTIQ+ people with disability within support and service sectors and the specific needs of the community
- the opportunity to participate in the development and delivery of supports and services.

### **People with disability living in regional and remote communities**

Respondents called on the State Plan to consider the additional barriers faced by people with disability living in regional and remote communities, emphasising that a ‘one size fits all’ approach to improving access and inclusion in the state will not necessarily be meaningful for people living outside metropolitan Adelaide.

Respondents highlighted challenges for these communities, including:

- the lack of local services and supports
- limited transport options further inhibiting access to supports
- a shortage of local employment opportunities, including meaningful pathway opportunities (volunteer to paid employment)
- limited resources and funding to support greater access and inclusion
- communication difficulties in areas less reliant on technology.

Respondents highlighted that although regional communities tend to be supportive, the community dynamic can also lead to people’s privacy being breached, including unwarranted disclosure of disability. This further raises the notion that disability can be perceived differently in regional and remote areas.

For access and inclusion to truly be improved, Respondents called on the State Government to ensure adequate resources were made available to NGOs, local councils and local services.

## **Theme 2: Justice, safety and emergency management**

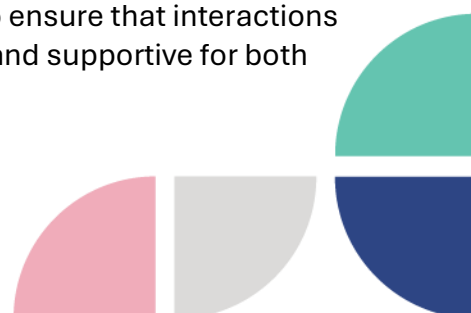
### **Understanding and awareness of police and custodial staff**

Respondents highlighted that there are still misconceptions held by police and corrections staff often mistaking disability- related behaviours for non-compliance, and that staff are not provided the support and resources needed to shift this thinking.

It was reported that people with disability have experienced being dismissed as not credible when interacting with first responders and concerns were raised about negative treatment experienced when their disability was not obvious or visible.

Respondents highlighted that people working within the criminal justice system, especially corrections officers and those working in youth detention, would be better equipped to work effectively with people with disability if they had a better understanding about disability.

Targeted awareness training and more disability-related education and development must be provided to police, corrections staff and other first responders to ensure that interactions are safe, fair and supportive for both parties.



Participants called for workers in these settings to adopt a trauma-informed approach when engaging with people with disability. Knowledge of de-escalation techniques and flexibility in their approach were suggested to enable a more effective response. In regional communities, this extended to providing additional training to volunteer first responders.

*“As an autistic person I am extremely nervous about being interviewed by police. Although I appear like a normal, everyday person I can struggle answers questionnaires and being interviewed because I can interpret the questions in a different way to others.”*

## Emergency response management

The safety of people with disability in times of emergency was highlighted by Participants as an ongoing area for improvement. Challenges faced by people with disability during emergencies include:

- the inability to use emergency hotlines (the Deaf community contacting triple-0 as an example)
- the lack of training for emergency response staff to support people with disability in emergencies (ambulance staff and police in particular)
- the lack of Auslan interpreters present at public announcements where emergency response management is broadcasted.

To support improved emergency response management, Respondents noted improvements could be made by:

- developing resources in collaboration with people with disability
- ensuring a variety of communication methods are used, including the dissemination of resources
- supporting the development of personal emergency and evacuation plans for people with disability who live in high-risk areas
- training emergency response staff to better understand disability and be trained in various communication methods (Auslan, Assistance Technologies etc)
- building relationships with key support networks within the community to help identify at-risk individuals and share safety information
- establishing a voluntary system for sharing information or identification among emergency service departments to improve efficiency and tailor the emergency response
- establishing a comprehensive and central information database where people can retrieve resources to support emergency management planning.

## Navigating the justice system

All people entering the justice system (either as a victim, witness or defendant) deserve the right to a fair and equitable process. Unfortunately, Respondents highlighted that the criminal justice system is, as a whole, unfair towards people with disability. Respondents highlighted the challenges associated with:

- seeking accurate, accessible and easy to understand information regarding processes
- obtaining supports and services when complex communication



needs are required, including interpreters

- resourcing of independent advocacy services to support the navigation process
- a lack of culturally-appropriate supports and services for Aboriginal and CALD people with disability
- systemic racism and ableism embedded in existing policies, programs and initiatives.

In addition, making the process of reporting a crime easier for people with disability, especially when they feel vulnerable, was highlighted to ensure their safety and wellbeing remains the priority.

### **Over-representation in custodial settings**

People with disability are over-represented in the criminal justice system as both victims of crime and alleged perpetrators. Respondents highlighted the Disability Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People with Disability (DRC) findings that people with disability are more likely to experience violence, abuse and neglect across their life compared with those without disability.

Respondents also highlighted statistics indicating the over-representation of Aboriginal people with disability in custodial settings, which is further compounded by the fact many people with disability in custodial settings are either undiagnosed or under-diagnosed or choose not to disclose their disability at all. This indicates that current data may not truly reflect the landscape.

Respondents called for greater emphasis on the overlapping and interconnected discrimination of

Aboriginal people with disability and the need for more understanding and awareness of disability within the criminal justice system to ensure programs and supports are designed to be culturally-affirming and accessible.

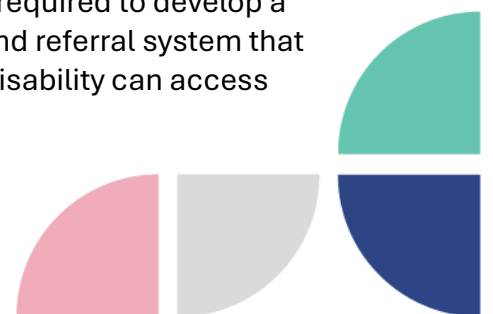
Proposed solutions provided by Participants included:

- addressing the likelihood of people with disability coming in contact with the justice system in the first instance
- giving people with disability a greater say in how relevant policies and programs are designed and delivered
- providing access to community-controlled services and supports that deliver culturally safe, and disability-rights informed programs
- reviewing and updating out-dated policies, laws and regulations to ensure a more inclusive and fair criminal justice system.

### **Streamlining safeguarding systems**

Respondents called for a more streamlined and easier to navigate safeguarding system to ensure people with disability are free from violence, abuse and neglect. With safeguarding being a responsibility across both state and federal government, it is essential that these systems can operate effectively alongside each other and minimise the risk of people with disability falling through the cracks.

Respondents highlighted that safeguarding systems can be difficult to navigate, with confusion over where to go when support is required. In turn, more work is required to develop a complaints and referral system that people with disability can access



securely, confidentially and in ways they can easily understand and use.

Further solutions to improve safeguarding included:

- investing in independent advocacy services to support people with disability
- ensuring targeted safeguarding supports for children with disability and their carers are readily available and accessible, including for those in out-of-home care settings
- addressing and responding to recommendations made by the DRC.

### Theme 3: Positive learning environments and supports

#### Knowledge and understanding of teachers and educators

Understanding and awareness of disability within educational settings was highlighted as an area for continuous improvement. Respondents noted that the educational experience would greatly improve if teachers and educators received better support to enhance their understanding of disability, enabling them to provide appropriate supports for children and students with disability.

This includes improving initial and pre-service teacher education and ongoing professional development throughout their careers.

Recent improvements to increase knowledge of teachers and educators working with Autistic children and students with the implementation of the Autism Inclusion Teachers has been a welcome addition to the educational environment.

Respondents highlighted the need for:

- dedicated training and professional development of teachers and educators to better understand the diverse ways in which children and students learn
- cultivating a culture of acceptance and understanding in the early years
- fostering early interaction between children and young people with disability and other students.

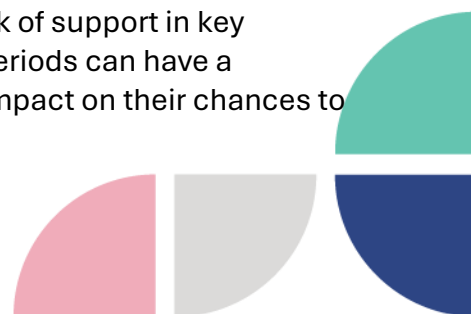
*“...Students who are educated at a young age to accept and support individuals living with disabilities, will become the best advocates in the future.”*

#### The transition between classroom, year levels and beyond

Participants highlighted the need for better supports for children and students during key transition periods, including:

- school transitions
- post-school transitions
- transition between childhood and adulthood
- transitions between living and care arrangements.

Participants emphasised that the State Plan needs to prioritise the full and equal participation of children and students with disability across the entire educational experience, including the transition from school to the workforce. Respondents also noted that the challenges faced by children and students with disability and the perceived lack of support in key transitional periods can have a detrimental impact on their chances to



not only finish school, but also impact their post-educational opportunities.

Participants identified opportunities to further improve pathways between, and from, the educational environment, including:

- strengthening connections between schools, universities and trade industry
- exploring opportunities for traineeships and graduate programs
- increasing the number of children and students accessing existing transition programs
- supporting greater connection between children and students with disability and those without disability to build strong relationships and peer networks
- designing tailored transition plans to ease complex transitions.

### **School exclusions, suspensions and segregations**

Participants described a range of challenges experienced by children and young people within educational settings relating to exclusions, suspensions and segregations, including:

- the trauma and exclusion they experience when segregated from their peers
- the impact that behaviour management and exclusionary practices have on children and students with disability
- the barriers families face when attempting to enrol their children into mainstream schools.

Respondents highlighted the need for inclusive education to be adopted in all areas of the educational environment to ensure children and students with disability feel included and welcomed in

mainstream educational settings and receive the supports and services they need to be successful.

Opportunities for improvement were noted as:

- strengthening support for teachers and educators (and leadership staff) to better understand the behaviours and qualities of children and young people with disability that could be misunderstood as disobedient
- addressing health and education needs from the outset through early intervention and timely access to assessments
- acknowledging and addressing the systemic factors that impact the wellbeing, participation and safety of children and students
- reducing the incidence and impact of exclusionary behaviour management practices.

It was noted by a Respondent that a new Suspension, Exclusion and Expulsion procedure by the Department for Education has been introduced for the 2024 school year to improve learning and wellbeing outcomes.

### **Early interventions, supports and services**

Participants noted that inclusive education must start in the early years and continue across the educational experience. All children and students, with and without disability, will require support at some stage of their educational experience. Respondents highlighted the importance of adequately resourcing education settings to meet the developmental needs of all students and ensuring flexibility in teaching methods.

It was also highlighted that the experiences of students with disability





in educational settings is varied and can be markedly different from school to school, from preschool to primary to secondary school, and depending on geographical location. It was suggested that more work be done through the State Plan to ensure consistency in the way students with disability are supported, regardless of what age they are, which school they go to, or where they live.

**“Well trained, well resourced and caring [education] staff are the key. Staff need to be valued by their employer to be resilient and motivated to continue to do the job that they do.”**

Respondents called for:

- the allocation of a dedicated disability advocate and resources within each school
- a centralised support network for teachers and educators where they can find information and support to manage the specific needs of their students
- prioritising social and emotional wellbeing and giving equal importance alongside educational outcomes
- ensuring environments cater for diverse sensory and learning needs
- greater accountability in the way funding is utilised and ensuring transparency and effectiveness in resource allocation
- providing more autonomy and flexibility by streamlining access to funding and resources for schools
- addressing the barriers faced in the child development checks program, including physical accessibility,

communication accessibility and cultural competence

- improving the collaboration and coordination between service providers, parents and caregivers, the student with disability and schools.

## Theme 4: Inclusive transport and infrastructure

### Accessible transportation

Respondents highlighted that for people with disability to actively participate in the community, easy access to various transport options is critical. From attending medical appointments to participating in recreational and leisure activities, Respondents noted that people with disability continue to face significant barriers to accessible transport, including the reliability and frequency of public transportation.

Accessible transport is fundamental to equal community access and inclusion of people with disability. Respondents called for additional steps to be taken to enhance the quality and reliability of South Australia’s transport infrastructure by:

- reviewing policies relating to transport standards to ensure genuine inclusion of people with disability
- improving communication methods (announcing upcoming stops and major landmarks)
- improving physical access, safety and connectivity
- improving the scope and acceptance of the South Australian Transport Subsidy Scheme.



Additionally, Respondents highlighted the importance of providing disability awareness training to all public transport staff, enabling them to effectively support people with disability to access trains, buses and trams.

Feedback from Participants also highlighted the additional considerations needed in regional and remote South Australia where public transport options are limited.

### **Accessible infrastructure**

The continued integration of Universal Design principles into the planning and design of public spaces, including parks and playgrounds, was seen as a priority for Respondents who highlighted the continued barriers they face when attempting to access their community.

Participants highlighted that there is more to be done to improve infrastructure around South Australia, including:

- accessibility of public buildings (beyond just the front door)
- design of playgrounds and play spaces to ensure equal access for children and young people with disability
- safety and accessibility of footpaths and road crossings
- increased availability of accessible parking spaces, ramps and public seating areas.

There were similar calls from Respondents in regional and remote areas who indicated that there remain significant access issues in regional and country towns, particularly local council buildings and facilities, parks and playgrounds and public bathroom facilities.

***“When places are built or modified to be accessible it works well, such as having ramps on beaches or having quiet hours/spaces at community events for neurodivergent people. I believe people with disability need to regularly consulted and given the opportunity to implement decisions with planning for a better and more inclusive South Australia.”***

### **Engaging with the experts**

Respondents highlighted that co-design with people with disability is critical to ensuring that our public transport system and built environment is accessible and inclusive of all people with disability. Feedback indicates that too often, accessibility is based on legislation or policies that define ‘standards’ however these do not always mean they’re accessible to the individual.

Co-design is fundamental to ensuring lived experience is central to design and delivery and Respondents called for greater emphasis on this at all stages of the development process.

## **Theme 5: Workforce diversity and pathways to meaningful employment**

### **Knowledge and acceptance**

A strong theme emerging from consultation was the need for greater understanding and awareness from employers about employing people with



disability and to remove barriers that people with disability continue to face when seeking meaningful employment.

There was a strong consensus that all employers should be required to undertake and maintain adequate disability awareness training delivered by people with disability. Furthermore, Respondents called for more accountability for employers who do not adequately support people with disability from gaining and maintaining employment.

Respondents also highlighted that for many people with disability, disclosure in the workplace is a sensitive and stressful experience, with many questioning whether disclosing their disability may lead to unfair treatment, discrimination or exclusion from future opportunities.

***“I have found across employment and education, that inclusion is based on how well you can pretend that you are not disabled.”***

To address attitudes and awareness within the workforce, Respondents highlighted the need for:

- strong public awareness campaigns that target employers and recruiters to make visible the potential, rather than the limitations, of employing people with disability
- creating workplace environments where people with disability are supported to reach their career goals
- addressing the misconceptions that hiring people with disability increases operating costs

- promoting positive workplace environments where disclosure of disability is welcomed and supported
- building capacity of people with disability to gain leadership positions.

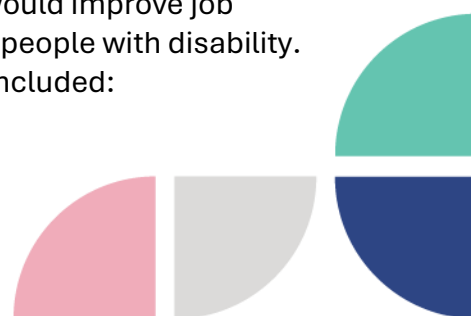
Respondents proposed several suggestions to improve employment support in the workplace for people with disability, these being:

- implementing timely and reasonable adjustments, including flexible working arrangements
- offering on-the-job training and formal and informal development opportunities
- making use of peer group networks and emphasising the significance of inclusion in social aspects of work
- ensuring that contributions from all employees are celebrated equally
- ensuring that any form of employment support must be made in consultation with the person with disability, and that feedback in assessing the quality of support and programs is essential.

### **Innovative recruitment**

Respondents highlighted that the rigid recruitment processes adopted by employers are often barriers for people with disability and this leads them to avoid applying for positions altogether.

Accessible employment must start before the formal recruitment process commences; from the ways jobs are advertised to the way employers undertake interviews and assessments. Participants highlighted that a more diverse, innovative approach to recruitment would improve job prospects for people with disability. Suggestions included:



- seeking information from candidates on any accessibility requirements they may require to support their participation in the recruitment process
- providing alternative methods of interviews (online, face-to-face, formal and informal)
- providing interview questions and a summary of the interview process ahead of time to allow for adequate preparation
- considering the environments where interviews will take place to ensure they are accessible and can accommodate those who may have sensory sensitivities.

In addition, Participants highlighted that since the COVID-19 pandemic, flexible ways of working have become somewhat standard practice in many professions and this flexibility should not be rolled back.

### **Earning a liveable wage**

A liveable wage is essential for choice and control in life and yet, people with disability still experience significantly higher rates of unemployment and underemployment, impacting their earning potential.

Participants highlighted that Australia's Disability Strategy 2021-2031 addresses the employment prospects for people with disability, however noting this can only occur when all levels of government come together to achieve meaningful solutions.

People with disability in leadership positions was also raised by Respondents as an opportunity for improvement. For this to occur, people with disability must be afforded the same opportunities as anyone else and workplaces must be adaptive in their

processes and policies to ensure no one is left out.

Respondents would like to see the State Plan address the following:

- improve data and reporting to effectively measure employment outcomes of people with disability
- for employers to have ambitious employment targets and build on these targets to ensure diverse representation in their workforce
- to raise career prospects for people with disability and ensure they are paid accordingly
- to ensure there are diverse pathways for people with disability to achieve promotions and be rewarded for their work.

### **Alternative pathways to employment**

Respondents highlighted that young people with disability should be given opportunities to gain meaningful employment and that supports and services be provided during their final school years to ensure the transition from school to employment is successful.

Feedback received included:

- design dedicated mentorships, traineeships and trade options for school leavers with disability
- offer work experience or work shadowing opportunities as a way of understanding job requirements
- consider the supports and services provided to people with disability during the school years for those who choose not to attend university or TAFE
- encourage self-employment and entrepreneurship opportunities



- ensure culturally-appropriate supports and services are available for Aboriginal and CALD people with disability to transition from education to employment.

## Theme 6: Accessibility of health and mental health supports and services

### Inclusive infrastructure in healthcare settings

Respondents highlighted that many healthcare settings around South Australia are not well-equipped to support people with disability. The overall inaccessibility of a building or facility can add additional pressure to an already sensitive experience and for people with disability this presents a significant concern.

The importance of consulting with a diverse range of people with disability when planning the design of new infrastructure is vital to improving the overall accessibility and inclusiveness of our healthcare settings. Furthermore, undertaking regular audits is required to improve the accessibility of older buildings.

Respondents called for:

- involving people with disability in the decision-making process about infrastructure
- buildings to be equipped with signage to detail any accessibility limitations and for these limitations to be addressed within a specific timeframe
- staff working in healthcare settings to proactively address any potential accessibility limitations when organising patient appointments

- ensuring the diversity of disability is addressed in the accessibility of a new building.

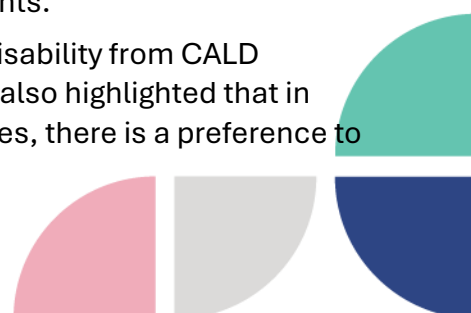
*“...interacting with the healthcare system when you also have a disability is difficult because they still work under the medical model of disability. I could be going in for a completely unrelated issue to my disability. However, medical staff don't know how to work with disabled people as just standard people...”*

### Personal and community supports

Respondents made clear that navigating supports and services can be a challenging and sometimes overwhelming experience. The barriers associated with accessing personal and community supports included:

- difficulties finding and accessing relevant and easy to understand information and the complex systems and processes required to access supports
- limited communication options and alternative communication methods, including lack of interpreters
- the significant cost and waitlists associated with many supports and services
- challenges in finding trained, reliable and suitable support workers
- the inflexibility of services and challenges with travelling to attend appointments.

People with disability from CALD communities also highlighted that in some instances, there is a preference to



avoid support people who belong to the same community, due to confidentiality concerns.

## Healthcare and medical support

Feedback from Respondents highlighted that accessibility and inclusion of people with disability in our healthcare system requires additional attention and that the State Plan must do more to ensure people with disability can receive the healthcare they need, when they need it.

Respondents noted the barriers associated with attending medical appointments including that General Practitioner (GP) surgeries, specialist centres and hospitals are inflexible and not well-equipped to support specific needs.

In addition, it was noted that additional training and awareness for medical professionals and support staff must be improved and that such training should be made mandatory and ongoing to ensure emerging research is embedded in the field. To support this further, Respondents called for more people with disability to be employed within healthcare settings. Respondents highlighted the need for:

- better information-sharing between healthcare settings
- timely access to referral services and more flexibility associated with appointment times and formats
- recognising individual support needs (allowing support workers and/or Assistance Animals to attend appointments)
- more consideration of the costs associated with accessing support
- a more coordinated approach to the provision of health supports,

specifically between mental health services and disability services.

Some Aboriginal people with disability expressed distrust of, and reluctance to use, mainstream services due to a perceived shame associated with asking for assistance. This highlights that difficulties still exist when disability intersects with culture and the need for culturally-responsive supports.

## Mental health support

Many Respondents highlighted the ‘overshadowing’ that occurs in both health and mental health settings, which relates to symptoms arising from physical or mental illness being misattributed to a person’s disability. This ‘overshadowing’ can cause significant issues, including:

- misdiagnosis and mistreatment
- delays in accessing treatment or support services
- poorer long-term health and mental health outcomes and significant trauma.

As echoed throughout the consultation, the compulsory provision of in-depth, meaningful and diverse disability inclusion training for all mental health professionals was highlighted as an area the State Plan must address.

The importance of positive and affirming community supports and services, access to diverse recreational activities, and peer networks was emphasised by Respondents to promote improved mental health outcomes for people with disability.

For many people with disability, social isolation is also a key contributor to poor mental health – for some, having the option to get out and meet people was seen as a positive way to improve mental health.



Respondents want to see:

- more public awareness on destigmatising mental health conditions
- more community and peer-support options to support improved mental health
- strengthening inclusivity of neighbourhoods to increase informal support networks
- mental health services equipped to support people with disability with overlapping barriers, including Aboriginal CALD and LGBTIQ+ people.

### **Carers and caregivers**

Participants highlighted the crucial role formal carers and informal caregivers play in supporting people with disability.

Carers and caregivers are holders of significant knowledge that can often be overlooked or not considered in both formal and informal support settings.

Participants called for additional resources, including:

- more recognition of the significant and often unrecognised and unfunded demand on carers and caregivers
- increased carer respite options, supports and funding
- acknowledgement from employers of carer responsibilities and availability of flexible working conditions
- more community acknowledgement of the role of carers and caregivers and increased community awareness campaigns
- improved supports for ageing carers and to ensure plans are in place if/when the carer is no longer able to fulfil their caring duties.

In addition, members from the LGBTIQ+ community identified the

challenges carers face when they are not recognised as family members – when they may be the only “family” a person with disability has.

The need for more comprehensive support networks, outside informal networks like Facebook Groups, is required to ensure carers and caregivers can find the information they need.

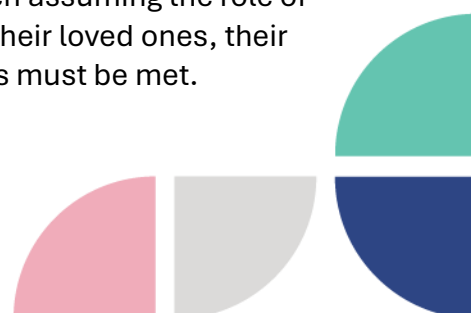
***“I don’t provide fulltime care, so I am not eligible for the bigger payment from Centrelink (Carer Payment), but it’s hard to find jobs that are flexible and my caring work is still a lot of time and it is very difficult to manage without a good income, everything is so expensive.”***

### **Supporting the family**

The support needs of families of people with disability was highlighted throughout the consultation, with many raising concerns that there are limited supports and services available to access.

The role families play in the life of a person with disability is significant and often lifelong. As such, the health and wellbeing of family members must be considered to ensure they can continue providing much needed support to their loved ones.

As noted during the consultation, one of the best safeguards for people with disability is to have family involved closely in their lives, and with family members often assuming the role of advocate for their loved ones, their support needs must be met.



Respondents highlighted that the State Plan should:

- include specific measures for how family members can be supported as they support people with disability, including respite options
- acknowledge the expertise of family members and include them when designing and developing supports and services
- include the provision of tools and resources to support families in navigating services for their loved ones, highlighting the powerful support of ‘parent to parent’ mentorship and disability-specific peer groups
- help support family members to engage in education and employment in cases of significant caregiving so they too can lead fulfilling lives.

Finally, it was noted that siblings of people with disability can be significant contributors to the quality of life of a person with disability – especially in the early years. As noted by Respondents, siblings are often a person’s first friend, ally and confidant and, as they grow up together, this bond often continues.

Respondents highlighted that the wellbeing of young siblings of people with disability needs to be addressed to ensure they too can succeed. This includes in our educational settings, where the pressure of school life can compound pressures they may face elsewhere.

## Theme 7: Active involvement in the community

### Inclusive events and cultural activities

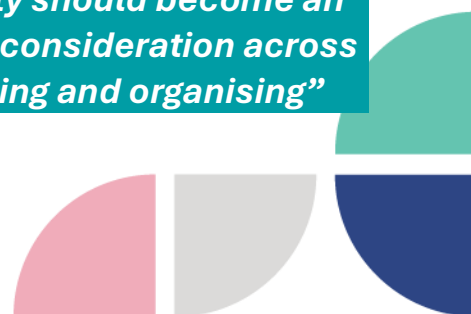
Respondents highlighted the positive improvements to make public events more accessible, however noted further work is required to improve their overall accessibility.

With South Australia being known for its many events and festivals, accessibility for, and inclusion of, people with disability is an important consideration to ensure everyone can experience and participate equally.

Participants said:

- ongoing consultation with people with disability is vital to ensuring the accessibility and inclusion of an event
- public transport, parking, bathroom facilities and infrastructure can be barriers for people with disability participating in major events and need to be considered
- improvements need to be made to ensure ticketing and accessible seating booking processes are inclusive
- accessibility of major events should be incorporated into the design stage at the start and not left as an afterthought or something that is just an obligation.

***“Considering the diversity of the community should become an automatic consideration across all planning and organising”***





Respondents highlighted that all levels of government need to take responsibility and help drive meaningful change, ensuring events and cultural activities held throughout the state are engaging and accessible for all people with disability – and to ensure the diversity of disability is considered. This includes:

- having dedicated sensory spaces available
- adequate numbers of accessible toilets and parking spaces
- ramps and pavements suitable for wheelchair use
- signage and wayfinding
- Auslan interpreters
- removing misconceptions around cost-barriers incurred to allow people with disability to participate at events
- ensuring audio descriptions and diverse communication methods are available.

### **Sports and recreation**

Making sporting clubs and community groups more inclusive was also seen as an area for improvement, noting many people with disability often enjoy the benefits that come with an active lifestyle.

With many sports offering ‘all-abilities’ options within their clubs or associations, more work should be done to ensure people with disability are encouraged to join their local clubs and associations and feel truly welcome and included.

A barrier for many is the associated costs of registrations, uniforms and equipment. Consideration of how people with disability can access subsidised schemes (such as the Sports Voucher program) is required.

In addition, Respondents highlighted:

- disability awareness training should be encouraged for clubs and associations so they can better include people with disability and support active participation
- the need to emphasise the benefits of an inclusive club and association and encourage a welcoming environment for all
- expanding the Sports Voucher program to include alternative sports that may be more appropriate for people with disability
- ensuring infrastructure at sporting venues is inclusive and accessible.

## **Theme 8: Developing the next State Disability Inclusion Plan**

### **Reporting, governance and accountability**

Respondents highlighted that although the State Plan, since its inception, has created new opportunities for people with disability and improved access and inclusion more broadly, additional work is still required. This includes a stronger focus on accountability by State Government agencies and local councils.

Participants noted that better reporting requirements against the deliverables of the State Plan and all State authority Disability Access and Inclusion Plans (DAIPs) will ensure people with disability can stay updated on improvements being made. It was also noted that the format of these reports should be easy to locate and understand.



Respondents want to see the next State Plan:

- include a stronger emphasis on how State authorities report on their activities
- highlight the work of State authorities across social media and other channels so people with disability can stay updated
- align more strongly to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

**“...the renewal of the South Australian State Disability Inclusion Plan could not be at a more opportune time.”**

### **Data, milestones and meaningful targets**

In addition, Respondents called for the State Plan to include measurable targets, milestones and be informed by data to monitor progress. This includes a strong focus on showing how the impact of new initiatives, policies and programs are improving the accessibility and inclusion of people with disability within the focus area.

To support this, Respondents called on both State Government and local councils to be ‘ambitious’ in their targets and ensure steps are taken to demonstrate meaningful improvements across the life of the next State Plan and move away from terminology that does not drive action and change.

Overall, the State Plan must be visible, relevant, and valued by both the community and local and State Governments for it to be truly successful.

### **Co-design and collaboration**

Although the *Disability Inclusion Act 2018 (SA)* (the Act) requires all State authorities to undertake consultation with people with disability in both the development of the State Plan and DAIPs, Respondents called for a stronger focus on the diversity of disability representation, including:

- ensuring a diverse range of lived experiences are heard
- involving members from the Priority Groups outlined in the Act in addition to:
  - LGBTIQ+ people with disability
  - people living with disability from regional and remote areas
- involving families, carers and guardians.

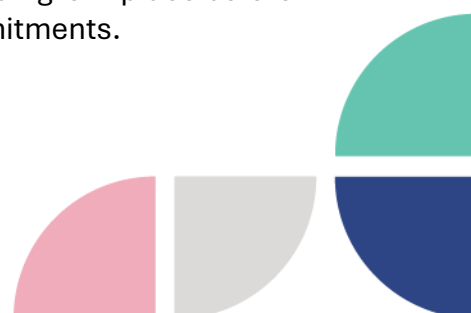
In addition, resources should be made available for State authorities who are designing their DAIPs to ensure they are responsive to the State Plan, compliant with the Act and can make genuine improvements.

### **Resourcing**

Respondents indicated that in order for the State Plan and DAIPs to be successful, they must be supported with a ‘top down’ approach, with State authority Chief Executives leading the way.

Local and State Governments were called upon to set the standard in including and promoting positive change in order for the private sector and local community to follow.

To do this, local and State Governments must dedicate resources and ensure adequate funding is in place before making commitments.



# Conclusion

This consultation report reflects the feedback received throughout the public consultation process on the review of the former State Plan and future opportunities.

All feedback received has been reviewed and used to inform this consultation report and will be used to develop the new State Plan for 2024 and beyond, as well as to support State authorities to develop their DAIPs.

DHS will continue to work in collaboration with other State Government agencies and local councils to design the new State Plan and supporting DAIPs.

Further consultation with people with disability will occur throughout the design phase.

A draft of the State Plan will be published for consultation prior to finalisation to ensure it accurately reflects the feedback received and responds to the priorities of people with disability in South Australia.

