Australian Cross Disability Alliance

ELECTION POLICY PLATFOR

"Building a Disability Inclusive Austral

ABOUT THE AUSTRALIAN CROSS DISABILITY ALLIANCE

The Australian Cross Disability Alliance (ACDA) is an alliance of national disabled people's organisations (DPOs). Our key purpose is to promote, protect and advance the human rights and freedoms of people with disability in Australia by working collaboratively on areas of shared interests, purposes and strategic priorities and opportunities. The ACDA is made up of four national cross-disability DPOs: First Peoples Disability Network Australia (FPDN); Women With Disabilities Australia (WWDA); National Ethnic Disability Alliance (NEDA); and People with Disability Australia (PWDA). We are funded by the Australian Government to be the recognised coordinating point between Government/s and other stakeholders, for consultation and engagement with people with disability in Australia.

First Peoples Disability Network Australia (FPDN) is the national cross-disability DPO representing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people with disability and their families. FPDN utilises a range of strategies in its representative role, including through the provision of high-level advice to governments, and educating the government and non-government sectors about how to meet the unmet needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people with disability.

Women With Disabilities Australia (WWDA) is the national cross-disability DPO for women and girls with all types of disabilities in Australia. It operates as a transnational human rights organisation and is run by women with disabilities, for women with disabilities. WWDA's work is grounded in a human rights based framework which links gender and disability issues to a **full range of civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights.**

National Ethnic Disability Alliance (NEDA) is the national peak organisation representing the rights and interests of people from Culturally and Linguistically Diverse/Non English Speaking Backgrounds with disability, their families and carers throughout Australia. NEDA advocates at the federal level so that people from Culturally and Linguistically Diverse/Non English Speaking Backgrounds with disability can participate fully in all aspects of social, economic, political and cultural life.

People with Disability Australia (PWDA) is the national cross-disability rights and advocacy organisation run by and for people with disability. Working within a human rights framework, PWDA represents the interests of people with all kinds of disability. Its primary membership is made up of people with disability and organisations primarily constituted by people with disability. It also has a large associate membership of other individuals and organisations committed to the disability rights movement.

THE KEY OBJECTIVES OF THE ACDA ARE TO:

- **work to advance the rights of all people with disability from all walks of Australian life, in relevant policy frameworks, strategies, partnership agreements and any other relevant initiatives;**
- **promote and engender a collaborative, co-operative and respectful relationship with all levels of Government in the efforts of the ACDA to advance the human rights of people with disability;**
- **build on and further develop networks, strategic alliances and partnerships at state/territory, national and international levels to advance human rights of people with disability;**
- **promote the ACDA at national and international levels as the coordinating point for engagement with the Australian DPO sector; and.**
- **build respect for, appreciation of, and faith in the DPO sector in Australia.**

FOREWORD

Approximately 20% of people living in Australia are people with disability. Yet we are too often shut out of civic life, jobs, and the community. We are often subjected to numerous forms of violence, exploitation, discrimination and segregation. We are hindered by negative attitudes; a lack of disability support; unimaginative programs; and inaccessible transport, buildings, communications and information. People with disability have been excluded from Australia's 'fair go' ethos.

2016 marks the 10 year anniversary of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) and this is an apt time to consider as a nation how far we have come and the ground ahead that we are still yet to cover. The roll out of the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) brings much cause for celebration, yet there is still much work to be done.

In providing a blueprint for equal access to all aspects of community life, the implementation of the National Disability Strategy (NDS) is pivotal to achieving a disability inclusive society. It is also a precursor to the ability of the NDIS to deliver the goals of increased social and economic participation for people with disability. The NDIS and NDS must be progressed in parallel so that the contribution of people with disability to the ongoing strengthening of our institutions, culture and communities is fully realised, recognised and celebrated.

In this 2016 Federal election, the Australian Cross Disability Alliance (ACDA) is uniting people with disability to call on voters, government, politicians, the media and business community to join with us to build a *Disability Inclusive Australia*.

In doing so we call on all political candidates and political parties to commit to 13 policy priorities which will help to shape and strengthen our nation through the realisation of inclusion, equality, respect and human rights for all people with disability:

1. Recast the National Disability Strategy as a mechanism for change
2. Engage with people with disability and their representative organisations
3. Fully fund the National Disability Insurance Scheme
4. Prioritise closing the gap for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people with disability
5. Establish a Royal Commission into violence, abuse and neglect of people with disability
6. Establish a National Redress Scheme for survivors of child sexual abuse
7. End disability discrimination in immigration policy
8. Guarantee equity of support for older people with disability
9. Prioritise a Jobs Plan for people with disability
10. Guarantee a fair and equitable social welfare system
11. Invest in affordable accessible housing
12. Ensure our education system is inclusive
13. Make our infrastructure and communications accessible

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ELECTION POLICY PLATFORM 2016

RECAST THE NATIONAL DISABILITY STRATEGY AS A MECHANISM FOR CHANGE

The National Disability Strategy 2010-2020[1] (NDS) is the mechanism under which all Australian governments are progressively implementing the UN Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities (CRPD).However, the progress reports[2] provide a clear indication of the need to recast the NDS as an engine for change, rather than a way to simply report on actions already undertaken. This requires the right mechanisms and the right investment.

Coordinated investment in concrete actions is required in order to achieve full inclusion and substantive equality for people with disability across all spheres of community life and mainstream services, such as transport, education, communications and information access, jobs, rights protection and justice, housing and healthcare. Coordinated cross-government leadership is required from the Australian Government down to local councils to ensure that disability inclusion is realised across all areas of our lives.

As we enter the next stage of the NDS, the ACDA calls on all candidates and parties to commit to:

- Recast the National Disability Strategy toward outward focussed actions and campaigns in areas such as justice, housing, employment and accessibility noting the good work done in some State and Territory jurisdictions.
- Recommit to concrete measures under the National Disability Strategy, including measures on disability access, housing, jobs, information access, rights protection, and civic participation opportunities such as a presence on the ABC and leadership development programs.
- Ensure actions and concrete measures under the National Disability Strategy are inclusive and responsive to diverse groups, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people with disability, women with disability, children and young people with disability and people from Culturally and Linguistically Diverse/Non English Speaking Backgrounds with disability.
- Develop strengthened public reporting mechanisms and transparent accountability measures within State and Territory agreements.

EFFECTIVE ENGAGEMENT WITH PEOPLE WITH DISABILITY AND THEIR REPRESENTATIVE ORGANISATIONS

1 in 5 Australians are people with disability, yet few mechanisms exist to support our participation and visibility in public life. Promises in 2014 to establish a Disability and Carers Industry Advisory Council have not come to fruition. With the demise of other advisory mechanisms, such as the National People with Disabilities and Carers Council and the National Disability Strategy Implementation Reference Group there are no formal engagement mechanisms for people with disability to provide feedback to Government on key reform agendas.

Recent years have also seen funding cuts to the ABC resulting in the end of Ramp Up, the dedicated online portal for disability issues, and a watering down of the requirement for there to be people with disability on the board of the National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA). Despite the momentous changes in the disability rights landscape over the last 10 years, people with disability still have no voice in the development of the research agenda required to support, evaluate, and monitor either the implementation of the CRPD in Australia or the NDIS.

1. *Council of Australian Governments, National Disability Strategy 2010-2020, Commonwealth of Australia, 2011*
2. *Department of Social Services, Progress Report to the Council of Australian Governments 2014*

In order to support a vibrant, diverse and democratic civil society the ACDA calls on all candidates and parties to commit to:

- Implement a robust policy engagement framework that enables people with disability and their representative organisations to be consulted on all legislation and policy that affects our lives.
- Establish a new Disability and Carers Advisory Council to bring together industry, the service sector, peak bodies, people with disability and carers to work closely with Government and provide expert advice.
- Fund the establishment of a Disabled People's Organisation (DPO) led research institute to build an evidence base for disability policy reform through the commissioning of research which is co-produced by people with disability.
- Fund a dedicated disability online portal in diverse languages on SBS.
- Fund a dedicated disability online portal or programming voice within the ABC, to meet the obligations of the ABC Charter in respect of disability, such as a multi-media news, opinion and podcast portal to build on the work of ABC Ramp Up.

FULLY FUND THE NATIONAL DISABILITY INSURANCE SCHEME (NDIS)

As a national insurance scheme the NDIS recognises that any Australian may acquire disability at some point in their life, and that the scheme to provide disability supports should be available to, and paid for by, everyone. In ensuring that people with disability finally get the support they need, the NDIS will become an essential pillar of our social infrastructure. This long overdue investment in people with disability and their families will enable more people to move into work, create jobs in the disability support sector, and provide further impetus for mainstream services to become accessible for people with disability. Thus it is critical that there is sustainable funding of the NDIS into the future. However, it is equally essential that funding of the NDIS is taken out of the budget cycle and not reliant on cuts to welfare spending, such as the Disability Support Pension (DSP), and revenue shifts from other human services.

The Information, Linkages and Capacity (ILC) component of the NDIS is targeted at all people with disability, particularly those who will not receive funding through the NDIS but who will need information, advice and support in order to successfully navigate the specialist and mainstream service system. The $132 million[3] set aside for these activities is inadequate to ensure that people with disability will have the advice and information they need to make independent and informed choices about their support options.

As the NDIS progressively rolls out, the ACDA calls on all candidates and parties to commit to:

- Retain the NDIS component of the Medicare Levy which provides predictable revenue to specifically fund the scheme into the future.
- Reject savings measures that link a fully funded NDIS to cuts to human services and welfare spending.
- Increase funding of the Information Linkages and Capacity Building (ILC) component of the NDIS.

3. National Disability Insurance Agency, Information, Linkages and Capacity Building Commissioning Framework – Consultation Draft, December 2015

PRIORITISE CLOSING THE GAP FOR ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER PEOPLE WITH DISABILITY

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people with disability are amongst the most marginalised in Australian society. It is estimated that approximately 45% of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people identify as having some form of disability, with 9.1% having severe and profound disability.

Despite the high prevalence of disability, policy attention which is sensitive to the unique circumstances of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people with disability has been negligible. Further there is little investment in research and data to address the gaps in understanding, which present a significant risk to the implementation of the NDIS in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

The ACDA calls on all candidates and parties to commit to:

- Address the unique circumstances which lead to systemic disadvantage for people who are both Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander and have disability in all government policies under the Indigenous Advancement Strategy and National Disability Strategy.
- Commit to equitable access to the NDIS by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, by dedicating resources to community-led solutions that understand and respond to the complex social circumstances affecting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people with disability.
- Establish disability access targets, to monitor equitable access to the NDIS by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people both as part of the Closing the Gap framework and the NDIS Quality Assurance and Outcomes framework.
- Invest in research and development to build an evidence base of data which support innovations in the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander disability sector and evaluates its social impact.
- Address the imprisonment rates of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people by resourcing a therapeutic model of justice for people with cognitive and psychosocial disability.
- Fund training and community leadership initiatives to enable regional and remote communities to conduct a self-directed needs, capacity and infrastructure analysis of disability supports and solutions.

ESTABLISH A ROYAL COMMISSION INTO VIOLENCE, ABUSE AND NEGLECT OF PEOPLE WITH DISABILITY

In 2015, the Senate Community Affairs References Committee's Inquiry into Violence Against People with Disability in Institutional and Residential Settings[4] shed light on hundreds of horrific stories that testify to the significantly high levels and myriad forms of violence experienced by people with disability. These personal accounts are just the tip of the iceberg however, and are indicative of a widespread and far-reaching problem that has particular dimensions and impacts for women with disability, children with disability, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people with disability and culturally and linguistically diverse people with disability.

The perpetration of violence is not restricted to a few rogue individuals, is not confined to disability support settings, and is not limited by state or territory borders. It is a national epidemic warranting urgent national leadership and action. Wide ranging systemic failures

4. *http://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Committees/Senate/Community_Affairs/Violence_abuse_neglect*

in legislation, policies and service systems underpin the conditions that give rise to violence, abuse and neglect of people with disability[5].

In line with the recommendations of the Senate Inquiry, the ACDA calls on all candidates and parties to commit to:

- Establish a Royal Commission into violence, abuse and neglect of people with disability in Australia.
- Establish an independent national statutory watchdog to protect, investigate and enforce findings regarding violence, abuse and neglect of people with a disability.
- Coordinate the development of nationally consistent Disability Justice Strategies across governments to ensure that people with disability are supported to access the same legal protections and redress as the rest of the community.

ESTABLISH A NATIONAL REDRESS SCHEME FOR SURVIVORS OF CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE

Children with disability face a heightened risk of sexual abuse whether at home, in the community, in institutional settings or through the receipt of specialist disability support services[6]. However, people with disability experience multiple barriers to justice, meaning this violence may not be investigated and prosecuted, and they may miss out on compensation for the abuse they experienced. People with disability also often struggle to access the services that survivors of sexual abuse need in order to deal with what happened to them.

In 2015 the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse[7] recommended a National Redress Scheme to make psychological support services, monetary payment and an apology (if sought) to victims and survivors of child sexual abuse. It proposed a scheme administered by the Federal Government to avoid inequities across Australia, and specifically recognised the institutional vulnerability of children with disability. Although it is not possible to fully compensate people with disability for the sexual abuse that occurred while they were children in institutions, a National Redress Scheme would address some of the barriers to justice they have faced, and ensure that an apology, life-long psychological support and monetary compensation would be within reach for all survivors with disability.

In line with the recommendations of the Royal Commission, the ACDA calls on all candidates and parties to commit to:

- Establish a federally administered and equitable National Redress Scheme for survivors of child sexual abuse, which includes psychological support services, a monetary payment to victims, and an apology (if sought) prioritises people with disability.

END DISABILITY DISCRIMINATION IN IMMIGRATION POLICY

Australia is a multicultural and diverse nation and almost 25%, or 1 million, people with disability who live here are from culturally or linguistically diverse backgrounds[8]. However, multiple policy and procedural mechanisms operate to exclude people with disability from settling in Australia. The Migration Act 1958 is exempt from the Disability Discrimination

5. *See e.g., Frohmader, C., & Sands, T. (2015) Australian Cross Disability Alliance (ACDA) Submission to the Senate Inquiry into Violence, abuse and neglect against people with disability in institutional and residential settings, Australian Cross Disability Alliance (ACDA), Sydney, Australia*
6. *Robinson, Sally, 'Enabling and protecting; Proactive approaches to addressing the abuse and neglect of children and young people with disability', Issues Paper, Children with Disability Australia*
7. *Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse, Redress and Civil Litigation, (2015) Commonwealth of Australia, available at: http://childabuseroyalcommission.gov.au/policy-and-research/redress*
8. *Data derived by National Ethnic Disability Alliance from the Australian Bureau of Statistics, Census of Population and Housing 2011, and the Survey of Disability, Ageing and Carers 2012*

Act 1992 meaning that potential migrants or refugees with disability who fail to meet the 'health requirement' are denied permanent residency on the basis that they are a potential 'cost burden' on the Australian taxpayer. In 2010, a Parliamentary Inquiry into the migration treatment of disability found the health requirement unfairly discriminates against people with disability[9]. For those who are granted permanent residency the Social Security Act 1991 bars access to the Disability Support Pension (DSP) for a period of 10 years leading to considerable barriers to social and economic support and participation.

These policies are discriminatory; fail to take into consideration the social, economic and cultural contributions that people with disability make to our communities; and undermine the values of inclusion that as a nation we should be seeking to uphold.

The current conditions facing detainees in mandatory indefinite immigration detention, particularly those held offshore in Manus Island, Nauru and Christmas Island, raise serious concerns with respect to Australia's obligation to ensure people are not subject to torture or cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment. People with disability in immigration detention are at heightened risks of physical and sexual violence, inadequate and inaccessible facilities; lack of access to necessary aids, equipment, medication, health and allied health care; lack of access to diverse language and communication supports and support for families and carers[10]. There is also evidence of the withdrawal of essential medication and equipment, including instances of hearing aids and prosthetic limbs being removed and destroyed, the use of solitary conferment, and the separation of people with disability from their primary carers, including spouses[11]. Indefinite detention can also lead to the development or exacerbation of psychosocial disability, either while in detention or as a result of this traumatic experience.

The ACDA calls on all candidates and parties to commit to:

- End mandatory and indefinite detention of asylum seekers as a matter of urgency.
- Remove the exemption in the Disability Discrimination Act 1992 as it applies to the Migration Act 1958.
- Enhance consistency, transparency and administrative fairness for migrants and refugees with disability applying for an Australian visa.
- Ensure that all immigration detention facilities provide reasonable accommodations for people with disability, access to appropriate aids and communication support, physical and mental healthcare and carer support.
- Abolish the 10 year qualifying period for migrants to access the Disability Support Pension.

GUARANTEE EQUITY OF SUPPORT FOR OLDER PEOPLE WITH DISABILITY

People with disability over the age of 65 are not eligible for the NDIS – unless they entered the NDIS prior to this age - and are expected to access specialist disability support through the aged care system, or My Aged Care. However, My Aged Care is not focused or experienced in providing specialist disability support; it requires co-payments to be made for services and supports; and it has a lack of accessible information about specialist disability supports

9. *Joint Standing Committee on Migration, Enabling Australia: Inquiry into the Migration Treatment of Disability, 2010, www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Committees/House_of_Representatives_Committees?url=mig/disability/report.htm*
10. *National Ethnic Disability Alliance, 'The Plight of People living with Disabilities within Australian Immigration Detention: Demonised, Detained and Disowned, 2015, http://neda.org.au/index.php/latest/183-plight*
11. *Bevan, N., & Sands, T., (2016) Australian Cross Disability Alliance (ACDA) Submission to the Senate Inquiry into Indefinite Detention of People with Cognitive and Psychiatric Impairment in Australia', Australian Cross Disability Alliance (ACDA); Sydney, Australia*

within the aged care system[12]. The key features of choice and control and integration and participation in community life are absent for people with disability in the aged care system[13].

A new Continuity of Support Program aims to support people aged 65 and over and Indigenous people aged 50 and over who are currently in receipt of specialist disability services and are ineligible for the NDIS. However, concerns remain that Continuity of Support will not assist people with disability in the aged care system whose disability support needs will increase over time. In addition, many older people with disability who acquire disability or who need specialist disability support and are not currently receiving this support, will be reliant on an aged care system not designed for them.

The ACDA calls on all candidates and parties to commit to:

- Urgently develop a national Disability and Aging Action Plan that aligns and integrates the provision of specialist disability support across service systems, including aging, NDIS and health; and that ensures equity in the provision of specialist disability supports to older people with disability, regardless of NDIS eligibility.

PRIORITISE A JOBS PLAN FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITY

The most recent OECD ranking placed Australia 21st out of 29 OECD countries for employment participation of people with disability[14]. In 2015, the Australia Bureau of Statistics reported that labour force participation for people with disability has not changed since 2012, staying at 53%, and that Australians with disability are still more likely to be unemployed than their peers without disability[15]. Employment of people with disability in the Australian Public Service has continued to decline to about 3%[16]. Women with disability are less likely to be in the labour force compared to men with and without disability and compared to women without disability[17].

The 2016 Willing to Work Inquiry Report from the Australian Human Rights Commission[18] recognised numerous systemic barriers to employment for people with disability including lack of practical assistance for employers to support employment of people with disability; negative employer and community attitudes; poor transition to work initiatives for school leavers; negative outcomes from disability employment services which fail to respond to individual needs or deliver long term job retention; segregation of people with disability in 'sheltered workshops' (Australian Disability Enterprises), and financial disincentives of entering the workforce such as increased accessible transport costs.

In line with the comprehensive suite of *Willing to Work* recommendations, the ACDA calls on all candidates and parties to commit to:

- Develop a National Employment Strategy or Jobs Plan for people with disability including targets, performance indicators and timeframes for increasing the workforce participation of people with disability and taking into account the gendered barriers to economic

12. *NDIS (Not Damn Interested in Seniors) = My Aged Scare! – Advocating for equality for over 65s, https://myagedscare.com*
13. *Kirsty Stein, "Promise of extra support", The Senior, Tuesday 26th April 2016, https://www.thesenior.com.au/news/promise-of-extra-support/*
14. *PricewaterhouseCoopers, Disability expectations: Investing in a better life, a stronger Australia (2011), PricewaterhouseCoopers, p3 http://www.pwc.com.au/industry/government/assets/disability-in-australia.pdf*
15. *Australian Bureau of Statistics, Disability, Ageing and Carers, Australia: First Results, 2015 http://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/Lookup/4430.0.10.001Main+Features12015?OpenDocument*
16. *Australian Public Service Commission, State of the Service Report 2014-15, Commonwealth of Australia http://www.apsc.gov.au/ data/assets/pdf_file/0010/72379/sosr-2014-15-web.pdf*
17. *Department of Social Services, op.cit., p55*
18. *Australian Human Rights Commission, Willing to Work – National Inquiry into Employment Discrimination Against Older Australians and Australians with Disability, 2016.*

participation.

- Reform of Disability Employment Services to deliver a person centred disability employment framework built upon choice and control for job seekers with disability.

- Extended eligibility for Centrelink payments and concessions for people with disability entering the workforce to provide a real incentive to work and a buffer from the additional costs of initial entry to employment.

- Progressive transition away from segregated employment for people with disability in Australian Disability Enterprises towards genuine work training and vocational skill building opportunities that lead to open employment.

GUARANTEE A FAIR AND EQUITABLE SOCIAL WELFARE SYSTEM

Australia currently ranks 26 out of 27 OECD countries for the percentage of people with disability living in poverty. Our accumulated short comings mean that 45% of people with disability in Australia live near or below the poverty line[19]. An adequate safety net must be available to all who need it, and provide for an adequate standard of living in relation to the rest of the community. This safety net is particularly important for people with disability who face significant and complex barriers to economic participation. The reality is that some people with disability will be dependent on income support over the long term.

The Disability Support Pension (DSP) provides for a basic standard of living, with little room for luxuries or savings. Cuts to the DSP mean that rather than being supported to live in dignity, people with disability dependent on income support fall further behind the living standards of the rest of the community. Changes to the DSP eligibility since 2013 have already left many people with disability struggling to survive on the Newstart or Youth Allowance, payments that are below the poverty line and in no way accounts for the additional costs associated with disability. The 2016 Budget measures subject a further 30,000 disability support pensioners a year for 3 years (90,000 people) to reviews that further threaten to plunge people with disability into poverty, homelessness and ill-health.

The ACDA calls on all candidates and parties to commit to:

- Increase the base rate of income support for Newstart and the Youth Allowance, and maintain this increase by indexing these allowances to average male weekly earnings.

- Retain a fair and realistic approach to DSP eligibility which takes into account the access issues, barriers and prevailing labour market conditions that prevent job opportunities.

INVEST IN AFFORDABLE ACCESSIBLE HOUSING

Access to appropriate, affordable and accessible housing presents one of the greatest barriers to inclusion for people with disability, limiting participation in all aspects of life. There is an urgent need for synergy between the development of housing policy and the development of disability policy in order to address the residualisation of people with disability into public and social housing, specialist supported accommodation, and homelessness; the lack of accessible rental properties in the private market; and the increased barriers to housing affordability experienced by many people with disability due to parallel barriers into education and employment, stigma and discrimination, and the additional costs of disability itself.

One of the most progressive components of the NDIS is the delinking of the provision of disability support from the provision of housing thus giving people choice and control in both. For this to work in practice it is essential that the choice of support provider isn't limited due to a lack of options for appropriate housing, or the choice of housing isn't limited due to service

19. *PricewaterhouseCoopers, op.cit., p11*

providers being incentivised to wrap accommodation options into their disability support packages thus making both cheaper to provide.

The NDIA Specialist Disability Accommodation (SDA) Framework[20] focuses on investment in housing options to meet shortfalls for NDIS participants who face significant barriers in the current housing market. While this investment is critical, there are concerns that SDA will continue to provide a parallel disability housing system that allows for the development of contemporary forms of institutional living, and that requires people to live in congregate arrangements[21].

It is imperative that people with disability receive adequate information about their housing options in the pre-planning phase of the NDIS. Critically, the mainstream housing sector must be educated on the rights and needs of people with disability so that it invests in and supports the development of increased numbers of appropriate, affordable and accessible, universally designed homes.

The ACDA calls on all candidates and parties to commit to:

- A Council of Australian Governments (COAG) housing reform agenda which specifically includes: access and affordability strategies for people with disability as a priority; components to educate community housing providers, private developers and landlords on disability inclusion and universal design; support for State and Territories to incentivise private investment to deliver increased accessible and affordable housing stock.
- Endorse the position of the Australian Network for Universal Housing Design that minimum access features, such as those in the Liveable Housing Design's Gold Level, be included in the National Construction Code for all new and extensively modified housing.
- Invest in the expansion of a revised National Rental Affordability Scheme with a focus on liveable, accessible housing in future rounds.
- Ensure that no person with disability will be compelled to live in specialist disability accommodation in order to receive the supports they need.

ENSURE OUR EDUCATION SYSTEM IS INCLUSIVE

In January 2016, the report from the Senate Standing Committee on Education and Employment Inquiry into 'Access to Real Learning: the Impact of Policy, Funding and Culture on Students with Disability' confirmed that the current education system is failing to meet the needs of many students with disability[22]. Despite available data showing that 90.2% of students with disability attend regular or mainstream schools, only 36% of people with disability aged 15-64 years complete secondary education compared to 60% of people without disability[23].

Currently, schools receive inadequate funding and resources to meet the needs of students with disability. This undermines the ability of schools to implement measures that would underpin inclusion including modifying curricula to meet the particular needs of different

20. *Specialist Disability Accommodation Position Paper on Draft Pricing and Payments, National Disability Insurance Agency*
21. *Ibid, p42*
22. *Senate Education and Employment References Committee, Access to real learning: the impact of policy, funding and culture on students with disability, Commonwealth of Australia, January 2016, p2*
23. *UPR Disability Coordination Group, 'Poor quality inclusive education for people with disability', Factsheet for Australia's Universal Periodic Review 2015*

students; increasing the staff to student ratio; and providing adaptive equipment and technology, accessible transport, universally designed environments and accessible social and extra-curricular activities[24].

Students with disability are also experiencing disturbing rates of bullying and restraint and seclusion. There are an increasing number of incidents being reported of children with disability being placed in 'withdrawal spaces', which effectively amount to seclusion in fenced off spaces, cages and cupboards[25].

The ACDA calls on all candidates and parties to commit to:

- Develop and resource a National Inclusive Education Action Plan to deliver on inclusive education and significantly improve the educational outcomes of children and young people with disability.
- Increase funding for schools including fully funding the disability loading component of the Gonski education reforms and reversing the cuts to the final 2 years of these reforms.
- End the use of restrictive practices on students with disability.

MAKE OUR INFRASTRUCTURE AND COMMUNICATIONS ACCESSIBLE

Access to the built environment, telecommunications, our communities, services, premises and transport is critical for people with disability to participate fully in the economic, social and cultural life or our communities.

However, people with disability face inaccessible communities, services and facilities on a daily basis. Footpaths are poorly designed, essential services such as doctors and dentists are located within inaccessible premises, many public transport networks remain inaccessible and accessible toilets are often not available in public venues. Information on public services is often inadequate, unreliable, and not provided in accessible and alternate format, and there is no text based option to communicate with 000 emergency services. Captioning quotas on both free-to-air and subscription television continue to restrict access to news, information and entertainment for those who rely on captions; and there is no audio description provided at all on television in Australia.

The *Disability Standards for Accessible Public Transport* and the *Disability (Access to Premises – Buildings) Standards* aim to provide people with disability with equitable and dignified access to public transport and buildings and provide certainty to industry that they are complying with the *Disability Discrimination Act 1992*. The current reviews of both the transport and premises Standards is critical, but there have been tight consultation timeframes and no mechanism to negotiate differing views across sectors, including the disability, design, certification, anti-discrimination and government sectors to ensure the reviews deliver increased consistency of application and greater compliance, and to minimise ambiguity about how Standards work in relation to other legislation, policies and frameworks in Australia.

The ACDA calls on all candidates and parties to commit to:

24. *Advocacy for Inclusion, Submission, Submission, Submission to ACT Government, Inquiry into the Unmet Needs of Students with Disability, 2010, http://www.legassembly.act.gov.au/downloads/submissions/12%20Advocacy%20for%20Inclusion.pdf*
25. *See e.g. "Report on Canberra boy with autism placed in cage released by ACT Government, principal loses position", ABC News, 8 September 2015, http://www.abc.net.au/news/2015-09-08/canberra-boy-in-the-cage-autism-report-released/6758582*

- Engage with State & Territory and Local Government authorities to develop nationally consistent guidelines for disability inclusion action planning.
- Develop Disability Standards and guidelines which address gaps in the current regulatory framework, such as for public spaces.
- Establish National Expert Advisory groups made up of cross-sector representatives for each of the review processes of Accessible Public Transport and the Access to Premises Standards to facilitate effective negotiation that leads to enhanced transport and premises access for people with disability.
- Provide for all National Relay Services to be available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year including video relay, and implementation of a national Next Generation 000 service to allow SMS communication with the 000 operator.
- Amend the Broadcasting Services Act to significantly increase requirements for captioning and to introduce audio description requirements for broadcast television that ensures equal access to television news, information and entertainment.

BUILDING A DISABILITY INCLUSIVE AUSTRALIA

13 QUESTIONS ON DISABILITY INCLUSION FOR CANDIDATES AND POLITICAL PARTIES

THE NDIS

1. What do you and your party see as the top 3 benefits of a fully funded and rolled out NDIS?
2. How will you and your party fund the NDIS into the future?
3. What steps do you and your party think need to be taken to ensure that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people with disability have equal access to the benefits of the NDIS?
4. What steps do you and your party think need to be taken to increase the numbers of people with disability from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds in the NDIS?

ECONOMIC SECURITY

5. What steps will you and your party take to increase job opportunities and job retention for people with disability? How will you ensure that the specific needs of female jobseekers with disability are addressed in your strategies?
6. If you and your party were in power what changes would you introduce to the welfare system to reduce the number of people with disability living in poverty?

JUSTICE AND HUMAN RIGHTS

7. What would you and your party do to address violence, abuse, neglect and exploitation of people with disability?
8. If you and your party were elected, what steps would you take to ensure that migrants and refugees with disability can be fairly assessed for visas, and can be supported to live in Australia?

ACCESSIBILITY

9. Have you asked your constituents what would make their communities more accessible in terms of public transport, public buildings, telecommunications and information? What did they tell you and how are their responses reflected in the policies of your party?
10. How do you and your party intend to respond to the crisis in accessible and affordable housing?

DISABILITY INCLUSION

11. What is your vision of a Disability Inclusive Australia?
12. If elected, what steps would you take to engage with people with disability in order to achieve this vision and realise our human rights?
13. Have you asked children and young people with disability in your constituency for their views on what an inclusive Australia should look like? What did they tell you and how are their responses reflected in the policies of your party?

Australian Cross Disability Alliance

ELECTION POLICY PLATFORM

"Building a Disability Inclusive Australia"

WOMEN WITH DISABILITIES AUSTRALIA (WWDA)

pwd
people with disability

NEDA

First Peoples Disability Network Australia

www.crossdisabilityalliance.org.au