Media Statement from Australia's Disability Representative Organisations

Disability Representative Organisations Call for Genuine Senate Scrutiny as Concerns Grow Over Rushed NDIS Reforms

Thursday 14 May 2026

Spokespeople available for interview across Australia are listed below

Australia's Disability Representative Organisations (DROs) are united in calling for a robust Senate Inquiry into the NDIS Reform Bill introduced today by the Australian Government.

We are deeply disappointed by the extraordinarily short timeframe of approximately one month for the Senate Inquiry to report. There are grave doubts that this will allow proper scrutiny of legislation, with major implications for the wellbeing, rights and supports for hundreds of thousands of people with disability, families and carers across Australia.

The Bill represents significant and complex change. Its highly technical content, with substantial elements left to future rules, operational decisions and implementation arrangements, requires careful and detailed analysis. DROs are dedicating time and resources to examining what is being proposed and are already identifying serious concerns. We need sufficient time to fully understand the detail before we can assess the full impact on the communities we represent.

The Senate Inquiry timeline does not allow time for written submissions, public hearings, and meaningful engagement with the disability community to occur. Any inquiry process must be

genuinely accessible with real opportunities to engage. This process fails to reflect people's support needs, and inclusive outreach to communities that are too often left out. This compressed inquiry further undermines trust in the reform process and increases the likelihood that people with disability will fall through the gaps.

People with disability, families and carers have already experienced years of ongoing reform, uncertainty and disruption. Major reforms that affect people's daily lives, supports and future security must be approached with care, integrity and proper scrutiny - not rushed through without adequate consideration of the real-world consequences.

Our focus remains unchanged. The sequencing of reforms currently proposed does not demonstrate transitional safeguarding arrangements, effective system connections, or proven mainstream service capacity. Reforms that are rushed, poorly designed, or implemented before systems are demonstrably ready risk serious consequences for people with disability and the broader community.

We are calling on all governments and Parliamentarians to engage directly with DROs and the disability community to understand the detailed impacts of this Bill, and to work with us on sensible amendments, safeguards and implementation arrangements.

DROs will continue to monitor the Bill's impact, provide evidence-based advice, and support people with disability and families with accessible and timely information about reforms that affect their lives.

Quotes attributable to Darryl Steff, CEO of Down Syndrome Australia

"These proposed changes will have real, day-to-day impacts on people with disability and their families. Without proper consultation, there is a serious risk of creating unintended consequences and further eroding the trust that people have in the NDIS."

Quotes Attributable to Sophie Cusworth, CEO, Women With Disabilities Australia (WWDA)

"Women, girls and gender-diverse people with disability are already being failed by eligibility settings and assessment tools that do not properly recognise our lives, our needs, or the way disability presents for us. We know women and girls are less likely to be found eligible for the NDIS than men. Rushing through reforms without proper scrutiny risks locking that gender bias even deeper into the system.

"This Bill cannot be treated as a technical change that only affects numbers on a page. For women and girls with disability, NDIS supports can be the difference between safety and violence, independence and isolation, being able to participate in the community or falling through the gaps.

"WWDA is deeply concerned that major reforms are being pushed forward before the safeguards, service connections and supports outside the NDIS are ready. Women with disability are already falling through the cracks between disability, health, housing, violence response and community services. Reform must not widen those cracks."

Quotes attributable to Jenny Karavolos, Co-chair/ Executive Officer of Australian Autism Alliance

"We cannot continue treating people with disability, including Autistic people, as the shock absorbers for systems governments have not yet properly designed, funded or made ready.

“Good reform is not reform that moves fastest. Good reform is reform that is safe, properly scrutinised, and implemented when systems are genuinely ready.

“People with disability and families have already lived through years of constant reform, uncertainty and disruption. Legislation of this scale should not be rushed through on timelines that make meaningful scrutiny and genuine community consultation almost impossible.”

****ENDS****

SPOKESPEOPLE AVAILABLE FOR INTERVIEW:

- Megan Spindler-Smith, Acting CEO, People with Disability Australia
- Emma Bennison, CEO, Disability Advocacy Network Australia (Hobart)
- Suzanne Gearing, CEO, Physical Disability Australia and Chair, Women With Disabilities ACT (Canberra)
- Sophie Cusworth, CEO, Women With Disabilities Australia (Melbourne)
- Skye Kakoschke-Moore, CEO, Children and Young People with Disability Australia (Adelaide)
- Darryl Steff, CEO, Down Syndrome Australia (Brisbane)
- Jenny Karavolos, Co-chair/ Executive Officer, Australian Autism Alliance (Adelaide)
- Lara Kissin, Acting CEO, National Ethnic Disability Alliance (Canberra)
- Ross Joyce, CEO, Australian Federation of Disability Organisations (Ballarat)
- Maeve Kennedy, CEO, Inclusion Australia (Melbourne)

THIS STATEMENT HAS BEEN ENDORSED BY:

- People with Disability Australia (PWDA)
- Disability Advocacy Network Australia (DANA)
- Australian Autism Alliance (AAA)
- Australian Federation of Disability Organisations (AFDO)
- Children and Young People with Disability Australia (CYDA)
- Community Mental Health Australia (CMHA)
- Down Syndrome Australia (DSA)
- First Peoples Disability Network Australia (FPDN)
- Inclusion Australia (IA)
- National Ethnic Disability Alliance (NEDA)
- Physical Disability Australia (PDA)
- Women With Disabilities Australia (WWDA)

MEDIA CONTACT:

Jane Metlikovec 0409 539 880 jane@upstride.com.au