Progress Report Card

The DRC Still Matters
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About the report card

Three years after the Disability Royal Commission delivered 222 recommendations to address violence, abuse, neglect and exploitation of people with disability, Australians are still waiting for evidence that governments are delivering the systemic change they promised.

The Disability Royal Commission heard from almost 10,000 people. Many shared deeply personal experiences with the expectation that their stories would lead to meaningful reform. While governments have accepted many of the Commission's recommendations, progress remains difficult to track and independent accountability remains absent.

This report card has been developed by a national coalition of Disability Advocacy and Representative Organisations to provide an independent assessment of progress. It examines ten key recommendations accepted by governments and asks a simple question: has real change occurred?

The ten recommendations were selected because they reflect issues consistently raised by people with disability and our member organisations. They cover disability rights and leadership, supported decision-making, inclusive education, advocacy, restrictive practices, domestic and family violence prevention, First Nations inclusion, NDIS safeguards and government accountability.

To assess progress, the coalition has applied a simple rating system based on publicly available government information and measure not only whether activity has occurred, but whether that activity aligns with the intent of the Disability Royal Commission's recommendations.

This should not be difficult to track. Australians should be able to clearly see what has been done, what has not been done, and who is responsible. Yet one of the Royal

Commission's key recommendations, the creation of an independent disability-led body to monitor implementation and publicly report on progress, remains unimplemented.

Understanding the ratings

Going backwards – Government action moves away from the recommendation's intent.

No real action – Little or no meaningful progress.

Early stages – Planning or consultation has commenced.

Some progress – Action is underway, but more work remains.

Done – Fully implemented in line with the recommendation.

1: Implementation of the DRC recommendations

Recommendations 12.2 & 12.3: Implementation and reporting

Responsibility: Australian, state and territory governments

Government response: Accept in principle

Progress so far: Early stages

The Disability Royal Commission delivered 222 recommendations in September 2023. Nearly a year later, the Australian Government accepted only 13 in full and 117 in principle, leaving significant reforms unresolved or dependent on further intergovernmental work. While program-level measures have commenced - including the Disability Employment Centre of Excellence, National Autism Strategy, Inclusive Employment Australia and NDIS reforms - the structural reforms needed to strengthen accountability remain outstanding. This is particularly significant for Recommendation 12.2, which calls for an independent National Disability Commission to monitor implementation, promote disability rights and ensure governments are accountable for

progress. Without such an independent oversight mechanism, implementation remains largely dependent on government processes and commitments. The pace of reform therefore raises a central concern: whether governments are prepared not only to implement individual programs, but to establish the independent accountability infrastructure necessary to deliver lasting systemic change. We believe leaving the governments to hold themselves accountable is an unnecessary risk. We can already see this risk with Disability Ministerial Council (DRMC) left in charge of implementing recommendation 12.3 (releasing progress reports). We are unaware of the plan for implementing this recommendation in the absence of a National Disability Commission. The DRMC is made up of politicians and is no substitute for an independent monitoring body, tasked with holding these same politicians to account. To date, progress reports have not provided an alternative which would ensure accountability and meaningful compliance with the DRC recommendations. The 2025 Progress report references the National Monitoring and Reporting Framework for the Disability Royal Commission referenced as being agreed upon in July 2024 by the DRMC. Stating this commits all governments to transparent and robust reporting. Ironically, this reporting framework intended to increase transparency is not publicly available. We are disappointed with the quality, consistency and transparency of the 2025 progress report.

2: Disability Discrimination Act reform

Recommendations 4.23 – 4.34: Disability Discrimination Act

Responsibility: Australian Government

Government response: Subject to further consideration

Progress so far: Early stages

Recommendations 4.23 to 4.34 relate to the review and amendment of the Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (Cth). In response to the Disability Royal Commission, the Australian Government committed $6.9 million to review and modernise the Act and accepted in principle the 15 recommendations relating to the Act. The Attorney-General's Department is leading the review and, in August 2025, released an Issues

Paper seeking views on options to implement the DRC recommendations and strengthen the Act. Public consultation, including written submissions, a community survey, forums and stakeholder roundtables, closed on 14 November 2025. The Department is now considering the feedback to inform the next stages of the review and advice to Government. No legislative amendments arising from the review have yet been enacted.

3: Disability leadership in government

Recommendation 5.5: Establishment of a National Disability Commission

Responsibility: Australian Government

Government Response: Subject to further consideration

Progress so far: No real action

Recommendation 5.5 recommended that the Australian Government enact a Disability Rights Act and establish an accompanying National Disability Commission as an independent statutory body. The body would be chaired by and majority-comprised of people with disability to monitor and oversee the Act, report on outcomes for people with disability across Australia, and promote best-practice and innovative approaches by sharing information across governments, the community sector, the private sector and the broader community. Its functions were to include producing a biennial *Outcomes for People with Disability* report to Parliament (covering progress under Australia's Disability Strategy 2021–2031, comparative traffic-light performance across jurisdictions, and analysis of NDIS and other outcomes data), as well as partnering with people with disability, their families and carers to develop advice and key reports; the Commission was targeted for establishment by mid-2025.

Separately, the Parliamentary Joint Committee on Human Rights (PJCHR) inquiry report, tabled 30 May 2024, reviewed the scope and effectiveness of Australia's Human Rights Framework and made 17 recommendations to strengthen it, including the enactment of a federal Human Rights Act and enhancements to the role of the Australian Human Rights Commission.

In its July 2024 response, the Australian Government confirmed it will consider the Disability Royal Commission's recommendations on the Disability Rights Act and National Disability Commission alongside the PJCHR's recommendations, rather than progressing them separately, in order to take a holistic approach to protecting the rights of all Australians.

No decision has yet been made on either the Human Rights Act or the Disability Rights Act/National Disability Commission, though the Government notes it is continuing to progress other reforms advancing the human rights of people with disability in the interim.

4: Legislate for supported decision making

Recommendation 6.6: Implement supported decision-making principles in legislation

Responsibility: Australian, state and territory governments

Government response: Accept in Principle (NSW, SA subject to further consideration)

Progress so far: No real action

Recommendation 6.6 (b) states that Governments should reform laws where people with disability are asked to make decisions about their lives to include supported decision-making principles. These principles include a presumption that people with disability are capable of making decisions and that they have the right to culturally-safe and appropriate support to make those decisions.

This is likely to include reform of nominee processes in NDIS and Centrelink where people can be appointed to make decisions on behalf of people with disability. It could also include other systems like My Health Record where appointees can control a person's health information.

The Federal Government's 2025 update on the Royal Commission response stated that the Department of Health, Disability and Aging were still actively investigating laws

where these principles could be incorporated. No updates have been provided since then.

5: Independent advocacy & NDIS appeals funding

Recommendation 6.21: **Additional funding for advocacy programs**

Responsibility: Australian, state and territory governments

Government response: Accept in principle

Progress so far: Some progress

Recommendation 6.21 recommended that, for 2024–25 and 2025–26, the Australian Government commit additional annual funding of $16.6 million for the National Disability Advocacy Program and $20.3 million for the NDIS Appeals Program, both indexed to maintain their real value, and that from 1 July 2026 the Australian and state/territory governments ensure long-term, stable funding for disability advocacy programs to meet demand, informed by improved data.

Progress so far has centred on near-term funding commitments rather than the long-term, indexed model the DRC envisaged. On the advocacy program side, the Australian Government has committed $39.7 million over four years to establish a new, streamlined individual disability advocacy program, with consultation underway since mid-2025, and has now progressed this further with a D*isability Advocacy Support Program* Tender announced in mid-2026, with results expected imminently. Existing advocacy funding has also been extended to 30 June 2026, with additional money directed to remote and rural service delivery and to improving data reporting.

On the appeals side, the Government allocated a further $7.034 million in the 2025–26 Budget to the NDIS Appeals Program, addressing part of the DRC's funding recommendation, though not on the multi-year indexed basis proposed. Coordination has also moved forward: the Disability Reform Ministerial Council agreed in February 2025 to amend the Disability Advocacy Work Plan 2023–2025 in response to the DRC's recommendations.

At the state and territory level, most jurisdictions (NSW, WA, ACT, NT, QLD, TAS and VIC) have maintained or extended advocacy funding, generally in step with the Commonwealth's June 2026 timeframe rather than beyond it. NSW extended its *Disability Advocacy Futures Program* with $28 million in March 2024 and added a further $3.1 million from its Department of Education, running until 30 June 2026, to support students with disability. WA extended its *State Disability Advocacy Program* agreements, worth over $5 million a year and split 50/50 between systemic and individual advocacy, to June 2026, and is separately reviewing the program's design. Other jurisdictions report ongoing funding and continued collaboration under the National Disability Advocacy Framework to improve access, cultural appropriateness and data consistency, but none have yet locked in funding certainty beyond June 2026. That gap, long-term stable funding matching demand from 1 July 2026 onward, remains the area where progress has stalled relative to what the DRC recommended.

6: Ending restrictive practices

Recommendation 6.35: Legal frameworks for the authorisation, review and oversight of restrictive practices

Responsibility: State and territory governments

Government response: Accept in principle (NSW subject to further consideration)

Progress so far: No real action

Recommendation 6.35 says that legal frameworks should be in place across multiple settings to ensure restrictive practices are only used, for example, as a last resort, and which establish a Senior Practitioner to, amongst other things, drive the reduction and elimination of restrict practice. Movement on this recommendation throughout Australia differs, however full implementation is yet to occur in Australia. Legal frameworks are evident in some state and territory for National Disability Insurance Scheme participants. It is important to note that restrictive practices continue to occur in health, education and justice settings without these legal frameworks, giving people with disability no reasonable legal backing to fight unfair decisions.

7: Inclusive Education

Recommendation 7.13: National Roadmap to Inclusive Education

Responsibility: Australian, state and territory governments

Government response: Accept in principle

Progress so far: No real action

Recommendation 7.13 urged the Education Ministers Meeting to release a National Roadmap to Inclusive Education, further recommending that state ministers report their progress in alignment with the roadmap. The DRC Progress Report 2025 mentions that the Education Ministers should have received advice on developing policy responses in the second half of 2025. While the Federal government and all states and territories agreed to report on progress annually, to date there have been no clear steps toward implementation.

The right to a fully inclusive education system is still out of reach for too many children and young people with disability in Australia. Without a concrete and actionable plan to address systemic barriers in Australia, students with disability will continue to be denied their fundamental right to be safe and included at school.

A clear, timely and evidence-based plan is required to transform Australia's education system so that every student is genuinely included and supported to succeed.

8: First action plan to end violence against women and children with disability

Recommendation 8.23: Action plan to end violence against women and children with disability

Responsibility: Australian, state and territory governments

Government response: Accept in principle

Progress so far: Some progress

Recommendation 8.23 Rather than developing a new action plan targeted at women and children with disability, the Department of Social Services developed the Disability Lens for the First Action Plan 2023–2027 under the National Plan to End Violence Against Women and Children 2022–2032. The Disability Lens outlines how the actions in the First Action Plan apply to women and children with disability, and the specific ways people with disability experience violence. The Department undertook stakeholder engagement to inform the Disability Lens, including consultation with state and territory governments, people with disability, the gender-based violence sector, the disability sector, and Disability Representative Organisations. The Disability Lens was published in July 2026. We hope to see the five-year action plan for Women and Children with Disability developed and implemented in the future.

9: First Nations Disability Forum

Recommendation 9.10: First Nations Disability Forum

Responsibility: Australian, state and territory governments

Government response: Accept in principle

Progress so far: Early stages

Recommendation 9.10 calls for governments to establish and fund a First Nations Disability Forum led by First Nations people with disability, First Peoples Disability Network (FPDN), community-controlled organisations and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peak bodies. The Forum would guide disability policy and funding, strengthen community-controlled organisations and build the First Nations disability workforce.

Consultation and design work took place across 2024 and 2025, including public submissions and national workshops co-chaired by First Persons Disability Network, Department of Social Services and National Indigenous Australians Agency. Yet almost two and a half years after the DRC's March 2024 deadline, neither the Forum nor its associated First Nations disability investment fund has been established or funded.

The Commonwealth's 2026 Closing the Gap Implementation Plan commits to "implement the First Nations specific recommendations" of the DRC by 31 December

2026, but still identifies continued design of the Forum as only the “first step”. With months remaining, there was no funding to establish the Forum in the 2026–27 Budget, no published decision or timetable, and no public account of how consultation will be taken forward. Without the forum, a central part of the DRC’s implementation architecture remains absent.

10: Better NDIS support coordination

Recommendation 10.2 – 10.4: Support coordination

Responsibility: Australian, state and territory governments

Government response: 10.2,10.4 Accept in principle 10.3 Accept

Progress so far: Going Backwards

Recommendation 10.2, 10.3 and 10.4 are focused on the independence and quality of support coordination with special consideration to NDIS participants at heightened risk. Work on the National Disability Insurance Scheme Amendment (Securing the NDIS for Future Generations) Bill 2026 has confirmed preference for a new commissioned support coordination and connection function planned for July 2028. It is unclear whether the changes as recommended in the DRC will be implemented before this date. Potentially leaving these recommendations in limbo until 2028.

“The Disability Royal Commission still matters. The people who shared their stories still matter. And the recommendations still matter.”

Suzanne Gearing, Chief Executive Officer of Physical Disability Australia