

Queenslanders with Disability Network Federal Election Platform 2019

QDN

QUEENSLANDERS WITH DISABILITY NETWORK
NOTHING ABOUT US WITHOUT US

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About QDN

[Queenslanders with Disability Network](#) (QDN) is an organisation of, for, and with people with disability. The organisation's motto is "nothing about us without us". QDN operates a state-wide network of members who provide information, feedback and views from a consumer perspective to inform systemic policy feedback and advocacy to Government and peak bodies.

About QDN's election platform

QDN's election platform identifies seven key priority areas and recommendations. We are seeking commitment from candidates in the federal election in relation to the recommendations under each priority. These seven key priority areas of commitment are informed by:

- Our 2,000 strong membership and support base
- Our 21 [Local Support Groups](#) across the state
- QDN work and engagement with over 21,300 people with disability and their families in delivering the following projects and initiatives:

[NDIS Peer to Peer Advocacy](#)

[Changing Lives, Changing Communities](#)

[Getting on the NDIS Grid](#)

[Ready to go NDIS Participant Readiness project](#)

[Bright Sparks](#)

[QDN Housing Position Paper – Going for Gold: Accessible, Affordable Housing Now](#)

Almost 1 in every 5 Queenslanders has a disability. That is almost 900,000 people, and approximately 91,000 of these people are expected to enter the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) as participants in Queensland by July 2019 (ABS 2012).

QDN's election platform focuses on the responsibility of the Australian Government in delivering and funding essential accessible, affordable and quality Government, community and mainstream services to Queenslanders with disability. This includes its critical role in leading the full inclusion and participation of people with disability in economic, social, civic and cultural spheres of life.

QDN calls upon candidates to adopt the recommendations in this platform, to lead with vision, to listen and act together and, if successful, to begin the job of implementing them immediately after the election.

QDN's seven election platform priorities

Priority 1 - The National Disability Insurance Scheme

Context

The National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) is a critical investment in the supports and needs of people with disability to live their day to day life in their communities, based upon principles of choice and control. NDIS participants want to access quality, affordable and integrated supports across mainstream, community and specialist services.

QDN supports the recently released [Joint Standing Committee report on the National Disability Insurance Scheme's Progress](#). The report covers issues impacting on the implementation and performance of the NDIS and includes [18 Progress Recommendations](#). Implementation of these are key to improving the NDIS going forward, and giving participants certainty of supports.

QDN has been working alongside people with disability and families over the past 5 years to ensure those eligible for the NDIS have the correct information and 'hands-on' support to make access. Many Queenslanders with disability who are eligible for the scheme need additional support, funding to cover assessment costs and advocacy to get the paperwork and evidence together in a streamlined way that meets National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA) requirements.

Additionally, QDN and our allies have successfully delivered innovative 'hands-on' projects to marginalised and vulnerable people with disability, supporting them to access the scheme and get an NDIS plan. Trust, connections and relationships are crucial to getting buy-in and good outcomes for this group.

There needs to be continued investment by Government in organisations with such expertise and established relationships, to continue to undertake this work if Queensland is to increase the number of new participants coming into the scheme.

QDN members are experiencing blockages and continued challenges with securing, activating and implementing their NDIS plans. People report frustrations in getting sufficient funding to cover the supports they require, including transport and supports coordination. Members also report significant time delays in getting plans approved and progressed, especially in relation to assistive technology and home modifications.

The role and importance of peer support, self-advocacy, independent individual and systems advocacy is critical in this space.

QDN sees a need to build the market and revise items in the NDIA Price Guide, so that people have real choice and control with their services, especially in the rural and remote parts of the state. Strategies and investment need to be in place to build people's capacity to self-manage and to build options where providers are thin on the ground.

QDN is also seeking urgent resolution to outstanding NDIS and mainstream interface issues across areas including housing, health, mental health, the Taxi Subsidy Scheme (TSS) and Community Transport. These need immediate resolution to enable people to have peace of mind and integrated disability services and support that meet their whole of life needs. QDN members especially want resolution around the TSS , community nursing, swallowing assessments, wound and catheter care and the Medical Aids Subsidy Scheme.

Finally, the provider of last resort, now known as 'Maintaining Critical Supports', continues to be an unresolved issue for people with disability so they can have certainty in circumstances of market failure and they will continue to receive the services and supports they need. This needs urgent resolution and clarification.

QDN calls for candidates to commit to:

- Urgent implementation of the [18 Progress Recommendations](#) in the [Joint Standing on the National Disability Insurance Scheme Progress Report](#)
- Returning the national underspend into the NDIS and re-investing this funding into fixing the NDIS, including funding a range of approaches that deliver people 'hands-on' support to implement and manage their plans;
- Re-negotiating components of the bilateral arrangements with regards to Queensland's investment in the NDIS, to ensure funding is available for the following initiatives:
 - a. Targeted strategies undertaken by non-government organisations to deliver specialist engagement with new participants, especially marginalised and vulnerable people with disability, to assist their access to, and participation in the scheme; and
 - b. Access to 'hands on practical support' for people with disability and their families; delivered through non-government organisations, once people are in the scheme. This will facilitate timely activation and implementation of plans. Alternatively, funding supports coordination and ensuring it focuses on capacity building and skill development.
- Urgent resolution of NDIS/mainstream issues in the areas of housing, health, mental health, the TSS and Community Transport;
- Improved flexibility around plan duration, including options to extend timeframes of plans to longer than 12 months, with review timeframes extended; implementing provider of last resort arrangements – Maintaining Critical Supports to ensure Queenslanders with disability with complex needs can access the support and services they need; and
- Investing in further workforce and market development to meet individual needs, contemporary practice and supply of quality services to meet demand.

Priority 2 - Royal Commission into violence, abuse, exploitation and neglect of people with disability (the Royal Commission)

Context

QDN welcomes the announcement and implementation of the Royal Commission. QDN is aware that the process of gathering and giving evidence at the Royal Commission is going to be a challenging time for each individual. QDN commends that part of this funding, \$149M, is committed to assist people with disability to participate in the Royal Commission.

QDN calls for candidates to commit to:

- The budget announcement, which allows for effective engagement and additional resources so that people with disability have the support they need to participate in the Royal Commission;
- Ensure Commissioners have no conflict of interest and that there are transparent processes in place to declare conflict of interest; and
- Ensure that the support available to assist individuals is tendered to organisations that are not direct service providers and are free from potential or real conflicts of interest.

Priority 3 - Housing

Context

People with disability are disproportionately affected by the lack of accessible, affordable, secure and safe housing in Australia. Demand far outstrips supply. Many people with disability on low incomes are forced to rent privately in a market where they face discrimination and a shortage of accessible properties. Affordable housing is often poorly located outside metropolitan areas, with limited accessible public transport, local services and employment opportunities.

Housing is not coordinated across Australia, with many different agencies and levels of government involved in the provision of housing for people with disability. We need a national housing plan for people with disability, as part of a National Housing Strategy, in coordination with the National Disability Strategy.

QDN's Housing Position Paper [Going for Gold: Accessible, Affordable Housing Now](#) contains four key principles of Rights, Choice, Inclusion and Control along with 11 major recommendations and strategic actions that can be taken now by Government, private and community sector stakeholders to address this fundamental human need and human right – to have a place to call home. QDN also supports the 2019 Housing [pre-budget submission](#) made by People with Disability Australia with input from the Summer Foundation, Australian network for Universal Housing Design and National Shelter.

Creative, flexible housing options are also key to the delivery of the objectives of the NDIS. Outcomes of the [SDA Review Framework](#) will benefit people with disability, as it will include an enhanced Participant Pathway.

People with disability require urgent targeted investment in accessible, affordable housing. QDN calls on the National Housing Finance and Investment Corporation (NHFIC) to provide further investment in, and development of, accessible, affordable housing stock for people with disability.

QDN believes the re-funding of the National Rental Affordability Scheme (NRAS) should have specific targets so people with disability can access assistance through this scheme, particularly those who are not eligible for the NDIS or Specialist Disability Accommodation (SDA) Housing.

QDN supports an increase in Commonwealth Rent Assistance for people with disability. Current rent assistance is not adequate to reduce housing stress for many people with disability who rely on income support, such as the Disability Support Pension and Newstart.

QDN supports the recommendations set out in the [Everybody's Home campaign](#) regarding increasing public housing stock, including setting targets for dwellings for people with disability. This should align with the Council of Australian Governments

(COAG) reforms regarding the National Disability Agreement, linking future national housing agreements with this strategy and setting targets to achieve outcomes.

The Australian Government needs to ensure that the National Construction Code incorporates the Livable Housing Australia Gold Level design features.

Additionally, the Australian government should ensure that home purchase assistance, including shared equity is available to all people with disability. These programs should be expanded to all States and Territories.

QDN calls for candidates to commit to:

- Development and implementation of a national housing plan for people with disability, as part of a National Housing Strategy, which aligns with the National Disability Agreement and Strategy;
- Re-funding the NRAS with set targets for people with disability to get assistance through this scheme;
- SDA Review Framework implementation including key recommendations to ensure that SDA is appropriately funded to deliver new housing options for people with disability;
- Enhancing National Housing Finance and Investment Corporation's (NHFIC) mandate to include borrowing for accessible and affordable housing;
- Mandating accessibility features in all new housing, through the National Construction Code, to a minimum of Livable Housing Australia Gold Level Design.
- Implementing funding options to make all necessary modification of existing social housing to meet Livable Housing Australia Gold Level Design;
- Increasing Commonwealth Rent Assistance by 30% for people with disability; and
- Undertaking a study into the national expansion of existing state home purchase assistance programs to assist people with disability, including shared-equity opportunities with families, to enter and maintain home ownership.

Priority 4 - Transport

Context

Safe, accessible and affordable public and private transport options are essential for people with disability. People need access to a range of transport options, subsidies and programs, which have the underlying intent of providing access to the same level of transport options the rest of the community experiences.

Accessible transport remains a Commonwealth, State and Local Government responsibility and a right of all people enshrined in international conventions, the National Disability Strategy, and legislative frameworks.

Members with disability have continued to raise the impacts and challenges they experience in securing accessing affordable, accessible transport. In particular, unresolved NDIS/mainstream interface issues in relation to the TSS and community transport remain an issue of frustration and concern for members and supporters .

Aviation is a Commonwealth responsibility. QDN member feedback reinforces the increased challenges people with disability are experiencing if they require 'special assistance' to travel. People with disability are willing to meet known compliance requirements imposed by airlines however, QDN believes government, aviation authorities and airlines need to clearly articulate compliance/regulations in easy to understand language and multiple accessible formats. Disability awareness training should be mandatory for all airline employees.

QDN made a number of recommendations in the [Third Review of the Disability Standards for Accessible Public Transport \(DSAPT\)](#) recently. QDN calls upon a future Australian government to implement these recommendations.

QDN calls for candidates to commit to:

- Implementing standards in DSAPT that require accessible public consultation with people with disability and their supporters before the procurement of any public transport;
- Leading actions to uphold Australia's obligations, enshrined in various United Nations (UN) treaties and protocols to which Australia is a party in regards to the provision of safe, accessible public transport. This is the responsibility of local, state and federal governments and is actioned through legislation, policies, action plans and position statements which set clear targets;
- Development of clearly articulated compliance/regulations in easy to understand language and multiple accessible formats by the Australian Government, aviation authorities and airlines;

- Provision of mandatory disability awareness training for airline employees and requirements for adequate customer data management so there is some awareness of a passenger's equipment and individual requirements; and
- Urgent resolution of NDIS/transport mainstream issues around essential transport services such as the TSS and community transport, to ensure people with disability receive these essential services in an integrated way that meets their life needs.

Priority 5 - Health

Context

People with disability often have more complex health needs and a higher mortality rate, and face many barriers accessing appropriate health care, and a narrower margin of health, than the general population. QDN members highlight the many challenges they experience in both accessing health care and being an informed, participating consumer of health services.

QDN members have informed us of issues relating to health including: unaffordable healthcare, complex health needs, a health workforce with perceived limited knowledge of disability and inadequate systems, inaccessible health services and limited personal knowledge of how to access and navigate the health system.

People with intellectual disability are twice as likely to suffer a potentially avoidable death compared to the general population. People with intellectual disability experience a large range of potential risk factors for early death, including heart problems, high blood pressure and obesity, and experience challenges accessing health care, in part due to capacity and communication issues and active discrimination. People with mental health and psychosocial disability also experience poorer health outcomes and additional challenges with accessing the right care, at the right time in the right place.

A health system that delivers integrated care across acute, sub-acute and primary health care, and greater integration and connected care across disability services is essential in delivering quality health care for people with disability. People with disability need to be actively included in the design, implementation and evaluation of integrated health services.

QDN supports the call for improved health outcomes and health care for people with disability, including people with intellectual disability. QDN supports work that upholds the UN Convention on the Rights of People with Disability, including the right to the highest attainable standard of health, without discrimination.

As outlined above, health is also a significant area of challenge with unresolved NDIS interface issues with regards to essential health services including mental health, wound care, and medical aids subsidy scheme. These issues are impacting upon people with disabilities' certainty of supports and quality of life, going forward.

It is critical that Governments set clearer boundaries and ensure that there are continuity of care arrangements in place to ensure that people can access these essential services.

QDN calls for candidates to commit to:

- Funding specific co-designed and peer led programs to increase the health literacy of people with disability. These programs should equip people with the skills, information and confidence to make informed choices, be knowledgeable of their healthcare rights and to successfully navigate the health system;
- Funding education programs and initiatives in Primary Health Networks and universities, to increase capacity of General Practitioners (GPs) and other allied health professionals to better meet the needs of people with disability;
- Establishing a national inquiry into the health of people with intellectual disability, with particular reference to health services within Commonwealth responsibility. The inquiry would conduct public consultations, review the current evidence for best practice and recommend a framework of action to provide accessible, high quality health care to people with intellectual disability;
- Funding a specific program in Primary Health Networks to enhance the capacity of GPs and other primary health services to respond to the needs of people with intellectual disability and to link them to appropriate healthcare;
- The development, piloting and evaluation of model curriculum enhancements to include core intellectual disability, physical and mental health content, in university medical and nursing schools. People with disability need to be involved in the design, implementation, teaching and evaluation of these curriculum enhancements; and
- Urgent resolution of NDIS/health mainstream issues around essential health services such as community nursing, mental health, wound and catheter care and medical and continence aids subsidies, to ensure people with disability receive these essential services in an integrated way that meets their life needs.

Priority 6 - Employment

Context

People with disability experience significantly worse employment outcomes than others in their community. People with disability are 'willing to work' and improve their individual economic and social participation, and routinely experience significant barriers to employment.

There are 2.1 million Australians of working age with disability. Employment outcomes for Australians with disability remain drastically below outcomes for the general population. Lack of inclusive skilling opportunities and workplaces contribute significantly to lower employment participation rates for people with disability in Australia. The Australian Government has a key role to play in setting targets for its own workforce, and offering inclusive skilling opportunities to people with disability.

In addition, people with disability need opportunities to develop skills, knowledge and confidence to influence their own lives and inclusion in communities. These opportunities need to focus on skills and attributes and should not be punitive in nature.

QDN calls for candidates to commit to:

- Adoption of disability action plans for all public entities and private workplaces, if currently not in place, including employment ratio targets for people with disability of 10-13% and a commitment to inclusive workplaces;
- Incentives for private workplaces to adopt disability action plans which also include employment ratio targets for people with disability and a commitment to inclusive workplaces;
- Offer skilling opportunities that are well-resourced, inclusive of and focused on people's skills and abilities and not be punitive in nature; and
- Offer funding for ongoing innovative programs focused on leadership of people with disability.

Priority 7 - National Disability Agreement and National Disability Strategy

Context

The [National Disability Agreement \(NDA\)](#) and [National Disability Strategy \(NDS\)](#) have provided the blueprint for the national disability policy landscape and architecture over recent decades. The recently released report by the Productivity Commission, *Review of the National Disability Agreement* provides clear recommendations for a cohesive policy architecture that will provide roles, responsibilities, accountabilities and overarching performance reporting frameworks for all levels of government. The recommendations extend well beyond the NDIS to other service systems such as housing, transport, health, justice and education.

The NDA covers 4.3 million people with disability in Australia, regardless of whether or not they are NDIS participants.

The report also outlines recommendations around Commonwealth and State responsibilities to provide disability services outside the NDIS. The report found that in particular there is lack of clarity about who is responsible for:

- Advocacy services;
- Community access and inclusion programs;
- Carer services; and
- Services to people with psychosocial disability.

As stated in the [Productivity Commission report](#), there is shared responsibility across all levels of government to deliver improved services. Responses to people with disability should be stated in the NDA.

The Productivity Commission found the new NDA should:

- Set out the aspirational objective for disability policy in Australia which acknowledges and reflects the rights committed to by Australia under the UNConvention of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD); and
- Outline the roles and responsibilities of governments in progressing the above objectives.

The Australian Government must endorse and accept the recommendations of the report and implement them as soon as possible.

QDN calls for candidates to commit to:

- Acceptance and implementation of the recommendations of the [Productivity Commission report *Review of the National Disability Agreement*](#); and
- Commitment to inclusive consultation on the new NDA in which people with disability have their voices heard, and are active participants in the planning, design and implementation of the new agreement.