



***MY DISABILITY
VOTE COUNTS***
ACT FOR INCLUSION

**QUEENSLANDERS WITH
DISABILITY NETWORK**

**2022 FEDERAL ELECTION
POLICY PLATFORM**

QDN
QUEENSLANDERS WITH DISABILITY NETWORK
NOTHING ABOUT US WITHOUT US

ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF COUNTRY

We acknowledge the people who are the Traditional Owners and Custodians of the land on which we gather. We thank the peoples of the land past and present for their custodianship and for the opportunity to meet in this place. Queenslanders with Disability Network (QDN) also acknowledges people with disability who have come before us and died in institutional settings, as well as those who are still trapped in institutions or silenced by institutional practices. We take on the responsibilities of being clear about the rights of ALL people with disability and, where necessary, speak in an informed and considered manner, for those who cannot speak for themselves.

ABOUT QUEENSLANDERS WITH DISABILITY NETWORK (QDN)

Queenslanders with Disability Network (QDN) is an organisation of, for, and with people with disability. Our motto is ‘nothing about us without us.’

QDN operates a state-wide network of 2,000+ members and supporters who provide information, feedback and views based on their lived experience, which inform the organisation’s systemic advocacy activities. We believe people with disability should always be at the table when decisions are made that directly impact their lives.

QDN’s systemic advocacy work encompasses a range of responses – from community campaigns, formal submissions, evidence to commissions and inquiries and membership of roundtables and working groups around national, state, and local government legislative and policy initiatives. QDN’s work is focused on the rights and full social and economic inclusion of people with disability within their communities. QDN’s systemic advocacy work has focussed on a range of key areas identified by Queenslanders with disability that has included the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS), improving mainstream services that people with disability rely on every day, including health, housing, employment, transport, and most recently the impact of COVID-19.

QDN also currently hosts 30 peer support groups across Queensland, made up of people with a diverse range of disability types, and convened by people with disability. The groups meet to socialise, share information, life experiences, and solutions to create more inclusive lives and communities. Local groups are a space for people with disability to share information on topics that are of interest to them, to extend their social networks, provide peer support, and to build capacity leadership skills. Groups usually meet on a monthly or bi-monthly basis, and meetings are held both face-to-face and virtually.

QDN is representing the collective voice of our members in this election campaign document.



**REPRESENTING
THE COLLECTIVE
VOICE OF OUR
MEMBERS**

INTRODUCTION

At this election, Queenslanders with a disability want to see action and progress.

For too long, people with disability in Australia have faced the same persistent barriers, which prevent them from accessing the same opportunities as every other Australian.

We want to see change and the time is now. As Australians with disability, we have not seen change in 30 years across a range of key impact areas in our lives, including rate of unemployment, accessible and affordable housing, poverty, and violence.

Throughout the consultation process for QDN's 2022 Federal Election Policy Platform '*My disability vote counts – Act for inclusion*' one point was made very clear – no matter what policy area– to get things moving and create change – it's time to listen to the real experts – people with disability. We have ideas and we have solutions, we vote, and we want to see candidates act for inclusion.

Queenslanders with disability are calling on political candidates across the state at this federal election to listen to them, and to work together to deliver change and inclusion.

It's essential the next Australian Government engages people with disability, from the beginning in planning, design, delivery, and evaluation across all Federal Government portfolios. This will deliver inclusive and accessible policy, services and systems that are more efficient, and deliver better outcomes for all Australians - not just those with disability.

The *Australian Disability Strategy 2021-2031* released on 3 December 2021 provides a strong platform to drive action and real change.

We call on candidates from all political parties and from all corners of the state to commit to the policy positions outlined in this platform. In doing so, you will be showing the 900,000 Queenslanders with disability and their families that you understand what it takes to get things moving to improve the lives of Australians with disability.

In terms of broader disability policy actions, Queenslanders with Disability Network (QDN) seek a commitment from all parties:

- to the *Australian Disability Strategy 2021-2031* and its principles, implementation, and actions co-designed with people with disability and in partnership with families, industry, community and Government.
- to undertake a review of Commonwealth human rights and discrimination legislation to deliver contemporary legislative instruments for the future.



ACT

FOR AN NDIS THAT DELIVERS CERTAINTY, CONTROL AND CHOICE

1. A guaranteed fully funded NDIS, co-designed with people with disability.
2. Targeted investment in peer support and building the capacity of people with disability and their families through information, linkages and capacity building funding.
3. Investment and innovative strategies to address NDIS workforce shortages across the country
4. Strengthen the powers of, and resources to, the NDIS Quality and Safeguards Commission to investigate, regulate and protect NDIS participants.



ACT

FOR INCLUSIVE EMPLOYMENT

1. Deliver on the 2021 National Disability Employment Strategy and recommendations yet to be delivered from the Willing to Work Inquiry.
2. Invest in a national, timebound, targeted strategy to address systemic and individual barriers to employment including recruitment, on the job, mentoring and incentives for short, medium and long term employment outcomes.
3. Adopt Disability Action Plans for public and private entities to drive increased employment of people with disability.



ACT

FOR INCLUSIVE, AFFORDABLE AND ACCESSIBLE HOUSING

1. Establish a long term national housing plan that includes a National Disability Housing Strategy co-designed with people with disability.
2. Strategic and targeted investment of NDIS funding to encourage a range of living options.
3. Enhance the National Housing Finance and Investment Corporation's (NHFIC) mandate to include borrowing for accessible and affordable housing.
4. Full implementation of accessibility standards under the National Construction Code across all jurisdictions; to ensure future housing stock is accessible to all Australians.



ACT

FOR INCLUSIVE HEALTH CARE

1. Continue telehealth and virtual models of care to deliver equitable, effective and integrated care.
2. Implement the National Roadmap for improving the Health of People with Intellectual Disability released in August 2020 and invest in 2022 in the National Centre of Excellence.
3. Invest and incentivise programs and strategies to address rural and regional health workforce shortages in primary, allied, general practice and visiting specialists.



ACT

FOR THE SAFETY AND WELL-BEING OF PEOPLE WITH DISABILITY

1. Develop a National Roadmap and Plan for inclusion of people with disability before, during and after a disaster and emergency and invest in multi-sector targeted strategies for people with disability, emergency and disaster sector capability and actioning Australian Disability Strategy targeted action plan.
2. Invest in specific strategies for women and children with disability as part of the implementation of the National Plan to End Violence against Women and Children 2022-2032.
3. Fully implement the recommendations of the Disability Royal Commission 2023 Final Report.



ACT

FOR INCLUSIVE AND ACCESSIBLE TRANSPORT

1. Implement the 9 recommendations of the Third Review of the Disability Standards for Accessible Public Transport 2002.
2. Work with the Queensland Government to resolve NDIS and mainstream transport access issues and subsidies including the Taxi Subsidy Scheme (TSS).
3. Lead actions to uphold Australia's obligations enshrined in international and national instruments to deliver safe, accessible public transport.



ACT

FOR INCLUSIVE EDUCATION AND TRAINING

1. Develop a national education plan that includes key actions, strategies and investment to deliver inclusive, high quality early childhood, school and tertiary education to children and adults with disability.
2. Improve the interface between the NDIS and the state education systems.
3. Deliver opportunities to improve pathways for vocational training co-designed with students with disability.



FOR AN NDIS THAT DELIVERS CERTAINTY, CONTROL AND CHOICE

The National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) is delivering much needed supports and services for people with disability and their families, and choice and control over how, when and where they receive supports.

However, despite significant progress in recent years, many Queenslanders with disability and their families still are experiencing barriers and challenges including plan activation, plan utilisation and reviews.

The Australian Government has a responsibility to ensure the NDIS is delivering for all people with disability.

Anecdotal reports from a range of Queensland NDIS participants highlight individual experiences of plans being reduced by 30-70%. Plan utilisation already remains low due to a range of impacts including COVID-19, lack of quality workforce, critical shortage of workers and thin markets, low levels of knowledge and skills of participants in activating plans and navigating the system. Support for full utilisation should be provided rather than cuts being made to plans.

The Queensland Government has committed to investing up to \$2 billion a year for the NDIS. Queenslanders expect that their money is being used to help Queenslanders with disability, that we get our fair share of NDIS funding, and that the scheme continues to offer value for money and greater choice and control.

QDN calls on all political parties to act to deliver an NDIS that works and delivers greater certainty, control, and choice by committing to:

- a fully funded NDIS that is guaranteed in both legislation and budget projections.
- a scheme that is fully co-designed with people with disability – from development, implementation, and review of all parts of the NDIS moving forward.
- strategic investment of information, linkages and capacity building in peer support and building the capacity of people with disability and their families.
- invest in and implement NDIS workforce strategies to address critical workforce shortages across the industry, and capability to deliver quality services and supports.

- ensure the NDIS Quality and Safeguards Commission has the correct level of powers and resourcing in place to improve capability to investigate, regulate, and protect NDIS participants from abuse, neglect, exploitation, and market impacts including price gouging.
- Funding targeted programs for groups who need extra support to access, navigate, and implement plans – including those with complex needs, people from an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander background, or people from culturally or linguistically diverse backgrounds, and women with disability.
- Commitment to deliver on the targets set in the Younger People in Residential Aged Care (YPIRAC) Strategy including no people under 65 entering residential aged care by 2022, no one under 45 living in residential aged care by 2022, and no people under the age of 65 living in residential aged care by 2025.
- Commit to Commonwealth, State, and Territory Governments continuing to have a shared role in the NDIS, rather than centralising decision-making authority in the NDIA. This should be reflected in NDIS-related instruments including the NDIS Act and any legislative changes to NDIS governance arrangements should be delayed pending the outcome of the review of the Act.
- Increasing funding for independent disability advocacy, including individual and systemic advocacy to assist people with disability navigate the scheme and have their say on changes to the NDIS. In particular, an increased allocation of funding is needed to provide free legal advocacy services to assist people with disability to navigate the NDIS Appeals Process, including AAT cases.
- A review of range of NDIS processes to deliver improved participant engagement and outcomes that are user-friendly, timely, clear, and accessible including:
 - communication, information, and responses as part of planning, reviews, appeals, and AAT.
 - plan reviews and plan rollover timeframes.
 - NDIS participant engagement activities.



FOR INCLUSIVE EMPLOYMENT

The unemployment rate of people with disability is double that of the general population.

The number of people with disability in the labour force has fallen by 3% in the past decade. At the same time, the number of working age people without disability participating in the labour force increased by 23%. Only 9% of people with disability report they have the same employment opportunities as other people. Complaints about discrimination in employment make up a significant proportion of all disability discrimination complaints made to Australian anti-discrimination agencies.

Action is needed to increase inclusive skilling opportunities, along with workplaces that are inclusive and contribute significantly to improving 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, workplaces need to build their knowledge, skills, and capacity.

QDN calls on all political parties to act for inclusive employment for people with disability by:

- funding targeted initiatives that align with the focus areas outlined in the 2021 National Disability Employment Strategy and recommendations that are still yet to be implemented from the Willing to Work Inquiry. Additionally, a national, timebound, targeted strategy specifically focused on:
 - inclusive and non-biased recruitment strategies and services including training and awareness raising for employers and recruitment agencies.
 - employer incentives for short, medium, and long term employment outcomes for people with disability.
 - innovative options that deliver choice, open, inclusive, and accessible forms of employment including and ensuring equal remuneration for work of equal value.
 - employment services that meet individual needs.
 - mentor and development programs for people with disability as small business owners.
- 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 training around inclusive workplace culture and practices.
- Funding for innovative programs focused on building and promoting the leadership skills of people with disability.



FOR THE SAFETY AND WELL-BEING OF PEOPLE WITH DISABILITY

The safety and wellbeing of people with disability should be central to all Government programs and services, whether they are supports in our day to day lives or in times of emergency or disasters.

The Commonwealth Government has a leadership role in ensuring people with disability are safe, protected, and have access to quality services and supports.

People with disability face higher rates of violence, poverty, physical, emotional, financial, sexual abuse, and exploitation than people without disability. This includes in person and on-line. More than a third of people with disability report experiencing violence or abuse, and almost 50% of people with disability report feeling unsafe where they live.

The Disability Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People with Disability (Disability Royal Commission) has now been operating for almost three years, with its terms of reference extended to 2023 based on the significant volume of evidence, stories, and history to be shared of the experiences of Australians with disability. So far, the Disability Royal Commission has exposed sobering statistics and findings about the safety of Australians with Disability, including:

- 40% of women with disability have experienced physical violence and are also twice as likely to experience sexual violence as women without disabilities¹
- The Federal Health Department's COVID-19 'vaccine rollout, especially to people living in residential disability settings and disability support workers was 'seriously deficient'²
- A Disability Royal Commission Issues Paper highlighted that respondents found: 'Disability Employment Service providers focus resources on participants more likely to get a job, a concept sometimes called 'creaming'; provide little assistance to more disadvantaged jobseekers, sometimes called 'parking'; and then cycle or 'churn' participants through activities and providers without achieving long-term results.'³

1 Disability Royal Commission. 'Alarming rates of family, domestic and sexual violence of women and girls with disability to be examined in hearing': disability.royalcommission.gov.au/news-and-media/media-releases/alarming-rates-family-domestic-and-sexual-violence-women-and-girls-disability-be-examined-hearing

2 Disability Royal Commission: 'COVID-19 vaccine strategy and roll-out for people with disability 'seriously deficient' – draft report': disability.royalcommission.gov.au/news-and-media/media-releases/covid-19-vaccine-strategy-and-roll-out-people-disability-seriously-deficient-draft-report

3 Disability Royal Commission: 'Not a recipe for success – The 'creaming', 'parking' and 'churn' of disability employment services': disability.royalcommission.gov.au/news-and-media/media-releases/not-recipe-success-creaming-parking-and-churn-disability-employment-services

These are just a few examples of the issues the next Federal Government will need to be ready to respond to in consultation with people with disability, as the Disability Royal Commission continues to hand down findings.

Across the world people with disability have been left behind in disaster preparedness and consequently experience greater disadvantage and challenges when emergencies strike. People with disability are disproportionately affected before, during, and after a natural disaster that, as a result of climate change, are occurring more frequently and with more intensity.

The United Nations Human Rights Council adopted a resolution on climate change and the rights of people with disabilities, calling on all governments to take a disability-inclusive approach to climate change action given its impacts disproportionately affect people with disability.⁴

The new *Australian Disability Strategy 2021-2031* includes a disaster preparedness, response, and recovery action plan, which is an important step forward. Similarly, the NDIS Quality and Safeguards Practice Standards includes a legislated requirement for NDIS registered providers to have business continuity plans in place and also support their clients to develop their own individual emergency plans for times of disaster. These policy changes provide the starting point for moving things forward, but the right policy must be matched with investment and action. The next Federal Government should invest in people with disability to lead their own person-centred disaster preparedness plans and be supported by a quality, skilled and informed workforce and sector across disability, community, and disaster management services.

QDN calls on all political parties to make the following commitments to act to prioritise the safety of people with disability, whether that be in their day to day lives, or in times of emergency by:

- Developing a National Plan and Roadmap to deliver Disability Inclusive Disaster Preparedness, Resilience and Recovery that includes:
 - a. Establishment of a National Disability Inclusive Disaster Risk Reduction Reference Group;
 - b. Build nationally consistent standards for:
 - i. emergency management arrangements across all levels of Government.
 - ii. service provider capacity building across disability and community services.
 - iii. policy guidance around shared and defined responsibilities in a disaster.

⁴ Human Rights Watch. 'UN Climate Resolution Emphasises Protection of Disability Rights': www.hrw.org/news/2019/07/15/un-climate-resolution-emphasizes-protection-disability-rights#

- Investment for a multi-sector targeted responses underpinned by collaborative and inclusive research that includes;
 - a. People with disability:**
 - Information, services, resources and supports by and for people to develop their leadership and own individual emergency disaster plans including household-based plans that address complexities faced by children and young people with disability and their families and caregivers
 - Policy changes that ensure people with disability are included in emergency management decision making, representation at all levels and investment in capacity building.
 - b. Sector Provider Capability**
 - To build capacity of disability and community services sector to comply with the NDIS Quality and Safeguards Practice Standards, increasing the preparedness of people with disability through individual emergency planning and ensure they can deliver continuity of services and supports;
 - Research on the impact of service provider contributions to disaster risk reduction with the people they support
 - c. Australian Disability Strategy and emergency and disaster sector**
 - Implementation and actions to deliver on the Australia's Disability Strategy 2021-2031 Health and Well-being priority 4 to deliver collaborative and inclusive local, state and national disability emergency action planning across all stakeholders and support to emergency and disaster management sector to deliver inclusion, and
 - Co-designing with people with disability, effective data and measurement tools to review and evaluate Emergency Management Targeted Action Plans under Australia's Disability Strategy 2021-2031, and subsequent plans.
- Implement the *Online Safety Act 2021* to include a focus on the online safety of people with disability and deliver investment in strategies and programs for people with disability to improve their online safety and address serious online abuse.
- Ensure all people with disability can access adequate, equitable support to meet their specific needs specifically people who are not eligible for the NDIS, people over age of 65 and equal access to assistive equipment.
- Investment in prevention and early intervention programs targeted to violence and abuse against people with disability.
- Investment in specific strategies for women and children with disability as part of the implementation of the *National Plan to End Violence against Women and Children 2022-2032* (National Plan).
- A commitment to work with people with disability and the disability sector to swiftly implement recommendations from the Disability Royal Commission.
- Publicly release a yearly report in Federal Parliament on the impact of climate change on Australians with disability, which includes up to date information on the specific impact climate change is having on people with disability, and disability-inclusive approaches the government is adopting in its action on climate change.



FOR INCLUSIVE, AFFORDABLE, AND ACCESSIBLE HOUSING

At QDN, we believe that there is nothing more fundamental than having somewhere affordable, accessible, secure, and safe to live.

It is foundational for other parts of our lives including physical and mental health, ability to find and keep a job, and build a social network in our communities. We believe the ability to choose where and with whom one lives is a basic human right.

A University of Melbourne study released in 2020 found 73% of people with disability live in housing that does not meet, or only partly meets, their accessibility needs.⁵ 80.8% of survey respondents agreed or strongly agreed with the statement “I can’t visit friends and family whose homes are inaccessible”.⁶ 71.7% of people with high support needs, and 50% of people with low support needs, living in inaccessible housing reported worsened mental health and wellbeing.⁷ Overall, the research found that inaccessible housing severely harms the ‘dignity, freedom, social inclusion, economic productivity, health and wellbeing’ of people with disability.⁸

The housing commitments outlined below are founded on the four key principles outlined in QDN’s report [Going for Gold: Accessible, Affordable Housing Now: rights, inclusion, choice and control](#). These principles should guide all policies, procedures, and program investments delivered by the next Australian Government to improve housing outcomes for people with disability.

⁵ University of Melbourne: ‘Living with disability in inaccessible housing: social, health and economic impacts’: https://disability.unimelb.edu.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0019/3522007/Accessible-Housing-FINAL-REPORT.pdf

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ University of Melbourne: ‘Living with disability in inaccessible housing: social, health and economic impacts’: https://disability.unimelb.edu.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0019/3522007/Accessible-Housing-FINAL-REPORT.pdf

QDN calls on all political parties to make the following commitments to act for inclusive, affordable, accessible, universal housing for people with disability by:

- establishing a long-term national housing plan for Australia that includes:
 - a National Housing Strategy for People with Disability in consultation with people with disability, and key housing and disability sector stakeholders.
 - a National Housing Planning Council that includes representation of people with disability.
- Endorsing and actioning the *National Plan for Affordable Housing* as developed by the National Affordable Housing Alliance (NAHA) with a key focus on the supply of accessible social and affordable housing that meets universal design standards.
- A strategic approach to NDIS funding that encourages development of a range of living options for people with disability and market delivery of a greater range of innovative housing options for people with disability.
- Enhancing National Housing Finance and Investment Corporation's (NHFIC) mandate to include borrowing for accessible and affordable housing.
- Full implementation of accessibility under the National Construction Code to ensure future housing stock is accessible to all Australians.
- With the cessation of the National Rent Affordability Scheme (NRAS), develop and invest in a new scheme to increase the supply of new and affordable rental dwellings by providing financial incentives.
- Increasing Commonwealth Rent Assistance by 50% for people with disability.
- Funding a comprehensive national trial 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.



FOR INCLUSIVE HEALTH CARE FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITY

People with disability have the right to access the same quality of health care as all other Australians.

Yet people with disability have poorer health outcomes than the rest of the community because of barriers to accessing appropriate health services.

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 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 owing to negative attitudes and a lack of awareness around their health rights.

Despite progress in recent years, many people working in the health sector still do not have access to adequate training regarding disability, which creates significant gaps in knowledge and leads to greater misunderstandings about the health needs of people with disabilities. More disturbingly, many QDN members still report that outdated attitudes and misconceptions about disability are affecting clinical decisions and compromising their quality of care.

Not only are many people with disability at higher risk from COVID-19, but the pandemic has exposed and exacerbated pre-existing inequalities and barriers for people with disability within the health system.

It is important that reforms that helped people with disability during the pandemic – like the expansion of Telehealth services - continue, and the lessons learnt can be implemented swiftly to deliver improved health services and outcomes for Australians with disability.

Many QDN members have raised that the COVID-19 pandemic has also exposed and amplified the lack of accessible mental health services and social isolation that people with disability already experienced at higher rates than those without disability. However, the flow on effects of physical separation from friends, family and community services has led to an increase in the use of mental health services and a rise in loneliness and psychological stress during the pandemic.

QDN calls on all political parties to make the following commitments to act for an inclusive health system that is more accessible, responsive, and aware of their needs and is learning the lessons from the COVID-19 pandemic to build an even stronger health system for the future for people with disability by:

- continuation of telehealth and virtual models of care to deliver equitable, effective, and integrated care for people with disability.
- investment, incentivising programs and strategies to address rural and regional health workforce shortages across primary, allied, general practice and visiting specialists.
- implement the *National Roadmap for Improving the Health of People with Intellectual Disability* released in August 2020, including in the first year of government, funding the national centre of excellence that is envisaged in the Roadmap.
- transforming primary based care structures to deliver team based care in primary health, especially in regional and rural communities to improve health outcomes for people with disability.
- 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 successfully navigate the health system.
- enhancing the capacity of GPs and other primary health services to respond to the needs of people with disability and to link them to appropriate healthcare.
- greater investment in mental health solutions and services, including community based mental health, which take a broader view of wellness, and address the gap in early intervention before acute care is required, particularly with the focus of post pandemic and disaster recovery.
- support Summer Foundation's pre-election federal budget call for investment for specific targeted program to get NDIS participants out of hospital and into suitable housing.



FOR SAFETY AND PRIORITY OF PEOPLE WITH DISABILITY DURING COVID-19 PANDEMIC

People with disability have felt left behind from the very beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic

At every stage of the Federal Government's COVID-19 response, the needs of people with disability have not been proactively planned for or articulated. Whether it was the vaccine rollout, provision of PPE, or now accessing affordable RAT tests, people with disability are one of the groups most at risk from COVID-19, yet last in line to receive the vital supports that save lives. As a result, QDN makes the following policy recommendations to ensure the needs of people with disability are proactively met as the pandemic moves into its third year:

- Australia's governments to prioritise people with disability in COVID-19 responses including:
 - providing free and accessible access to personal protective equipment (PPE), especially N95 or P2 face masks.
 - access to free rapid antigen tests (RATs) on an ongoing basis for both people with disability, our support workers and carers.
 - a coordinated surge workforce response to ensure continuity of services and supports.
 - priority access and processing of polymerase chain reaction (PCR) tests for people with disability, our disability support workers and carers.
 - rapidly vaccinate people with disability who have not been vaccinated, especially those in disability residential settings, those who receive the Disability Support Pension, and children aged 5 to 11 years old facing barriers in accessing vaccinations.
 - Prioritise access to booster vaccinations for people with disability.
- Ensure all governments adopt recommendations in the [Statement of Concern on COVID-19 Human Rights, Disability and Ethical Decision-Making](#).
- Provide guidance to people with disability, families, services, and support workers on how to monitor people with COVID-19 at home, including accessible information and self-care kits.

- Continue the provision of tele-health for primary and specialist care for all health care without restriction to non-bulk billed services or geographic location of provider or patient.
- Increase funding to mainstream health services and health research projects that are providing direct support to people dealing with the impacts of long-COVID to not only provide relief to those individuals, but also ensure Australia is leading the world in the diagnosis and treatment of the disease.
- Invest in biomedical research and support services for people with Long COVID.



FOR INCLUSIVE AND ACCESSIBLE TRANSPORT FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITY

Safe, accessible, and affordable public and private transport options are essential for people with disability to be able to visit friends, go to the doctors, or just visit the local park on the weekend.

Accessible transport prevents social isolation and leads to more connected and inclusive communities.

Accessible transport remains an issue for all levels of government – Commonwealth, State and Local Government. It is a right of all people enshrined in international conventions, the National Disability Strategy, and legislative frameworks.

However, QDN members continue to raise the impacts and challenges they experience in accessing affordable, accessible transport. Currently, over 20% of people with disability require another person to support them to use public transport.⁹

Additionally, as air travel picks up following the COVID-19 pandemic, many people with disability begin to worry about how they will be treated while flying and if their mobility aids will be damaged on the trip with thousands of complaints each year.

QDN calls on all political parties to make the following commitments to get Australia's public transport system moving more accessibly and affordably – meeting the needs of all people with disability by:

- implementing all nine recommendations of the Third Review of the Disability Standards for Accessible Public Transport 2002 (Transport Standards) released in November 2021. In particular, work with the disability community to establish a national disability advisory body to involve people living with disability in decisions on the reform, modernisation, and implementation of the Transport Standards.

⁹ Human Rights Commission: 'New guidelines for public transport accessibility': <https://humanrights.gov.au/about/news/new-guidelines-public-transport-accessibility>

- leading actions to uphold Australia's obligations, enshrined in various United Nations (UN) treaties and protocols to which Australia is a party in regard 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.
- urgently working with the Queensland Government to resolve both the NDIS and mainstream issues around essential transport services, including the Taxi Subsidy Scheme and community transport, to ensure people with disability receive these essential services in an integrated way that meets their life needs.
- developing clearly articulated compliance/regulations in easy to understand language and multiple accessible formats by the Australian Government, aviation authorities and airlines.
- requiring mandatory disability awareness training for airline employees, and requirements for adequate customer data management, so there is awareness of individual passenger's requirements and equipment.



FOR INCLUSIVE EDUCATION AND TRAINING

People with disability attend primary and secondary school at a similar rate to people without disability with (90% enrolled).¹⁰

However, while the number of students with disability attending school is comparable to students without disability, in all other educational settings there are major differences. These include:

- 32% of people aged 20 and over with disability have completed Year 12 compared to 62% without disability.¹¹
- 25% of people aged 20 and over with severe or profound disability have completed Year 12.¹²
- 10% of people aged 15–64 with disability are studying for a non-school qualification compared to 15% without disability.¹³

Data from the ABS shows the number of people with disability who have completed Year 12 has declined from 36% in 2012 to 32% in 2018.¹⁴

All Australians have a right to access education that is accessible and meets their needs.

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.

¹⁰ Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, People with disability in Australia, Updated 3 September 2019, <https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/disability/people-with-disability-in-australia/education-and-skills>

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2012, Disability, Ageing and Carers, Australia: Summary of Findings, 2012, ABS Cat. No. 4430.0, ABS Canberra.

QDN calls on all political parties to act for inclusive education and training through the following commitments:

- National Education Plan that includes key actions, strategies, and investment to deliver:
 - high quality inclusive education by States and Territories for children with disability
 - a high-quality, universally accessible, and affordable early learning system.
 - improved accessibility and inclusion within the higher education systems including university.
- Improving interface issues between the NDIS and state education systems.
- Provide opportunities for people with disability to build their skills with more accessible pathways to vocational learning, to be developed through a genuine co-design process alongside students with disability and the disability sector.
- Greater oversight of government-funded vocational programs for people with disability. In particular, providers must meet a baseline level of quality and be able to provide evidence of positive outcomes for participants to guarantee ongoing government funding.
- Fund initiatives to support students with disability – at all levels – to thrive while learning remotely. This is not just crucial during the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, but was also an issue during the 2020 summer bushfires, and requires ongoing consideration as part of natural disaster responses.



TO LOWER THE COST OF LIVING AND MOVE PEOPLE WITH DISABILITY OUT OF POVERTY

Forty-five percent of people with a disability in Australia live in poverty.

11.2% of people with disability experience deep and persistent disadvantage, more than twice the national prevalence. This rate is significantly higher for indigenous people with disability, 61% of people with disability cannot afford to cover their basic needs on their current income.

Government pensions are the main source of personal income for 42% of people with disability of working age. By comparison, wages or salary is the main source of personal income for 68% of people of working age without disability.

The median gross weekly personal income of people with disability is half that of people without disability. Income, welfare, and taxation systems in Australia do not recognise the significant costs that people with disability incur throughout their lifetime.

The Disability Support Pension (DSP) is inadequate to support people with disability. DSP eligibility has been tightened to such a degree that 25-30% of people with disability are now receiving the much lower Newstart unemployment payment, which has further entrenched poverty. The rate of successful DSP claims has declined markedly – from 69% in 2011 to 29.8% in 2018. While governments have significantly reduced the number of people receiving the DSP, this has not translated into increased employment and economic security for people with disability.

The next Federal Government must do more to ensure people with disability are not left behind in the economic recovery from COVID-19 and are able to cover their basic cost of living.

QDN calls on all political parties to make the following commitments to act so people with disability can have financial freedom to make choices about how they spend their own money by:

- raising the rate of the Jobseeker payment to minimum of \$940 per fortnight
- investing in a targeted strategy to deliver accessible and user-friendly financial counselling for people with disability
- expanding the No Interest Loans program
- reforming the access process for the Disability Support Pension and rate of payments to ensure economic security.