# Community Forums Summary Report

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Funded by the Queensland Government.

Written by Queenslanders with Disability Network.

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## Acknowledgements

Queenslanders with Disability Network (QDN) acknowledges the Traditional Owners of the lands on which we work. We pay our respects to the Elders – past, present and emerging – and acknowledge the important role Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people continue to play within the community.

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.

## Background & Introduction

QDN was engaged to develop the Queensland Disability Stakeholder Engagement and Co-Design Strategy (the Strategy) as a priority action of the Queensland Disability Reform Framework. The Queensland Disability Reform Framework is framework for disability reform in Queensland in response to the Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People with Disability (Disability Royal Commission) and the Independent Review of the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS Review).

The Strategy establishes structures to put people with disability and stakeholders at the heart of reform processes and guide collaborative work. You can read more about the strategy on the QDN website here: <https://qdn.org.au/qld-disability-co-design-strategy/>

Initial steps in the implementation of the Strategy included engagement of a variety of diverse stakeholders via community forums. This report summarises the participation and key outputs of these forums.

## About the Community Forums

The community forums were hosted by QDN in partnership with the Department of Families, Seniors, Disability Services and Child Safety and served several purposes including:

1. Connecting with people across Queensland communities
2. Sharing information about the approach to disability reform in Queensland
3. Letting people know about the Queensland Disability Stakeholder Engagement and Co-Design Strategy and extending an invitation for further involvement
4. Hearing feedback from Queensland communities about their key priorities for disability reform.

The community forums were held between 10 February and 14 February 2025. In total there were 11 community forums held across the state with a total of 787 registrations and 581 attendees. Three forums were run online and eight face-to-face forums were facilitated in the following locations:

1. Brisbane
2. Toowoomba
3. Ipswich
4. Gold Coast
5. Mackay
6. Rockhampton
7. Cairns

The forums were well attended by a range of stakeholders, including people with disability and their families or carers, advocacy, community and peak body organisations, disability service providers, state, local and federal government and community stakeholders. The range of forum attendees split by stakeholder type is shown in Figure 1 and are listed below.

1. Person with disability: 20%
2. Advocacy organisation: 15%
3. Federal Government: 3%
4. State Government: 7%
5. Family member/carer of person with disability: 12%
6. Disability Service Organisation: 27%
7. Other/not identified: 14%
8. Local council: 2%

During the forums, participants completed two activities. During the in-person forums these were completed by groups at tables and during the online forums participants could complete the activities individually and as a breakout group. Activity 1 was an opportunity for people to prioritise of reform areas. This involved deciding which three reform areas were the top priorities (reform areas are listed on page 3). Activity 2 was an opportunity for participants to indicate which reform areas should be prioritised in the 3–6-month timeframe, 6-12 month and 12–18-month timeframes.

*Figure 1: Forum participants disaggregated per stakeholder type*

## Queensland Disability Reform Framework

The Queensland Disability Reform Framework provides an outcomes-based, structured approach to delivering disability reform in Queensland, following the Disability Royal Commission and NDIS Review.

The Queensland Disability Reform Framework sets out key focus areas and initial reforms under three broad objectives and 12 outcome areas.

The three objectives are:

1. Inclusion, rights and voices
2. Quality services and supports
3. Commitment and accountability.

Outcome areas under each objective are listed below:

### Inclusion, rights and voices

1. Inclusion and participation
2. Empowerment
3. Partnership with people with disability

### Quality services and supports

1. Mainstream services
2. Foundational Supports
3. NDIS participant experience
4. NDIS systems and frameworks
5. Quality and safeguards
6. Disability workforce

### Commitment and accountability

1. Inclusive governance
2. Government partnerships
3. Evidence and accountability

For a full overview please see Appendix A or read the Queensland Disability Reform Framework on the Queensland Government website for more information here: <https://www.families.qld.gov.au/our-work/disability-services/queensland-disability-reform-framework/about-the-framework>

## Priorities identified by forum attendees

The community forums provided an opportunity for people to engage in the prioritisation of reform outcome areas. Through discussions and the two activities, participants identified their priorities for change and timeframes for their priorities.

Reform outcome areas of highest importance as voted by attendees at the community forums are listed below, in order of most to least votes.

1. Foundational Supports: 124
2. Mainstream Services: 122
3. Disability workforce: 113
4. Partnerships with people with disability: 102
5. Inclusion and participation: 98
6. Evidence and accountability: 97
7. Quality and safeguards: 94
8. Empowerment: 89
9. NDIS systems and frameworks: 83
10. NDIS participant experience: 60
11. Inclusive governance: 52
12. Government partnerships: 40

*Figure 2: Number of votes in reform outcomes areas of highest importance across all forums*

In addition to the quantitative data on outcome areas of highest importance, comments and discussion also identified some further insights:

1. Integration of service systems is critical to delivering the right support at the right time
2. Capacity building and upskilling mainstream services to work effectively with people with disability and their families
3. Building the capacity of people with disability to understand their rights, self-advocacy and to navigate systems is foundational to achieving progress against all the outcome areas
4. Quality and safeguards are needed across all the systems
5. Attracting and retaining a quality workforce particularly in regional, rural and remote areas is important alongside training and development
6. Funding models for disability services need updating (price of services needs to be updated and regulated)
7. There is a need to ensure a joined up approach to care and support between service systems
8. Clarity and linkages between mainstream services and foundational supports is important
9. Expanding opportunities for employment pathways and delivering inclusive workplaces with a clear focus on people with disability as a key part of the workforce
10. For Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people with disability, access to services is critical and support for navigating disability systems
11. Housing and health within mainstream services were highlighted as areas for priority action.

*“Emphasis should be placed on capacity building, ensuring that people with disability are the first to identify gaps and needs. Their authentic voices must be included in decision-making processes to influence change.”**– Forum participant*

## Regional Findings

The priorities of regional and metropolitan participants were mostly similar. The disability workforce featured as one of the highest areas of importance in regional and rural data. However, the empowerment outcome area was voted as less important regionally when compared to the overall ranking.

Key insights from regional forums which capture some of the qualitative findings:

1. Workforce is key in regional communities
2. Equitable access to mainstream services needs to be considered for regional areas

There are limited services and structures in regional communities to build and scale foundational supports and this needs to be considered

1. Work needs to be done to strengthen the integration of government services and sectors
2. Local government has a strong role to play in place-based initiatives to contribute to the reforms.

*“Clear policies and guidelines should promote equitable access, while training in accessibility and reducing exclusion for people with disability, especially in regional areas, is necessary.”* ***– Forum participant***

These comments strongly affirmed the cross-cutting priorities outlined in the Queensland Disability Reform Framework of:

1. Improving outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Queenslanders
2. Integrated services and joined up approaches
3. Addressing intersectional disadvantage
4. Access and service equity in regional, remote and rural areas.

Figures 3-9 show the views of attendees who participated in the forums at each location and are listed below.

### Both Brisbane forums

1. Mainstream Services: 48
2. Foundational Supports: 38
3. Inclusion and participation: 28
4. Quality and safeguards: 24
5. NDIS systems and frameworks: 19
6. NDIS participant experience: 17
7. Evidence and accountability: 16
8. Disability workforce: 14
9. Empowerment: 14
10. Partnerships with people with disability: 12
11. Inclusive governance: 9
12. Government partnerships: 6

### Toowoomba

1. Inclusion and participation: 9
2. Foundational Supports: 8
3. Mainstream Services: 5
4. Empowerment: 4
5. Quality and safeguards: 4
6. Partnerships with people with disability: 4
7. Disability workforce: 3
8. NDIS systems and frameworks: 3
9. NDIS participant experience: 3
10. Government partnerships: 3
11. Evidence and accountability: 2
12. Inclusive governance: 0

### Ipswich

1. Foundational Supports: 11
2. Disability workforce: 9
3. Mainstream Services: 8
4. Partnerships with people with disability: 8
5. Evidence and accountability: 5
6. NDIS systems and frameworks: 5
7. Inclusion and participation: 4
8. NDIS participant experience: 3
9. Quality and safeguards: 2
10. Empowerment: 1
11. Government partnerships: 1
12. Inclusive governance: 1

### Gold Coast

1. Mainstream Services: 13
2. Foundational Supports: 9
3. NDIS systems and frameworks: 9
4. Inclusion and participation: 8
5. Evidence and accountability: 8
6. Disability workforce: 6
7. Empowerment: 6
8. Partnerships with people with disability: 4
9. Inclusive governance: 3
10. Quality and safeguards: 3
11. Government partnerships: 2
12. NDIS participant experience: 2

### Mackay

1. Disability workforce: 18
2. Inclusion and participation: 15
3. Evidence and accountability: 14
4. Quality and safeguards: 12
5. Mainstream Services: 8
6. Empowerment: 7
7. Partnerships with people with disability: 7
8. Foundational Supports: 6
9. NDIS participant experience: 6
10. NDIS systems and frameworks: 6
11. Inclusive governance: 3
12. Government partnerships: 0

### Rockhampton

1. Quality and safeguards: 15
2. Disability workforce: 11
3. Foundational Supports: 11
4. NDIS systems and frameworks: 11
5. Partnerships with people with disability: 10
6. Mainstream Services: 9
7. NDIS participant experience: 8
8. Empowerment: 6
9. Government partnerships: 6
10. Inclusive governance: 6
11. Inclusion and participation: 5
12. Evidence and accountability: 3

### Cairns

1. Quality and safeguards: 17
2. Foundational Supports: 16
3. Mainstream Services: 15
4. Disability workforce: 14
5. Partnerships with people with disability: 14
6. Evidence and accountability: 11
7. NDIS systems and frameworks: 11
8. Inclusion and participation: 9
9. Inclusive governance: 6
10. Government partnerships: 5
11. Empowerment: 4
12. NDIS participant experience: 3

*Figure 3: Number of votes in reform outcome areas of highest importance at the two Brisbane Forums*

*Figure 4: Number of votes in reform outcome areas of highest importance at the Toowoomba Forum*

*Figure 5: Number of votes in reform outcome areas of highest importance at the Ipswich Forum*

*Figure 6: Number of votes in reform outcome areas of highest importance at the Gold Coast Forum*

*Figure 7: Number of votes in reform outcome areas of highest importance at the Mackay Forum*

*Figure 8: Number of votes in reform outcome areas of highest importance at the Rockhampton Forum*

*Figure 9: Number of votes in reform outcome areas of highest importance at the Cairns Forum*

### State-wide forums

1. Foundational Supports: 38
2. Mainstream Services: 43
3. Disability workforce: 16
4. Partnerships with people with disability: 38
5. Inclusion and participation: 47
6. Evidence and accountability: 17
7. Quality and safeguards: 18
8. Empowerment: 20
9. NDIS systems and frameworks: 24
10. NDIS participant experience: 25
11. Inclusive governance: 17
12. Government partnerships: 19

Figure 10 demonstrates the statewide perspective from attendees who participated in the online forums.

*Figure 10: Number of votes in reform outcome areas of highest importance at the online State-wide forums*

## Timeframes for Priorities

### Participants were given an opportunity to indicate which reform outcome areas should be prioritised in the 3–6-month timeframe, 6-12 month and 12–18-month timeframes and are listed below: Inclusion and Participation

1. 3-6 months: 63%
2. 6-12 months: 25%
3. 12-18 months: 12%

### Empowerment

1. 3-6 months: 43%
2. 6-12 months: 25%
3. 12-18 months: 32%

### Partnership with people with disability

1. 3-6 months: 68%
2. 6-12 months: 19%
3. 12-18 months: 13%

### Mainstream Services

1. 3-6 months: 40%
2. 6-12 months: 41%
3. 12-18 months: 18%

### Evidence and accountability

1. 3-6 months: 32%
2. 6-12 months: 39%
3. 12-18 months: 28%

### Foundational Supports

1. 3-6 months: 68%
2. 6-12 months: 24%
3. 12-18 months: 8%

### NDIS Participant experience

1. 3-6 months: 42%
2. 6-12 months: 46%
3. 12-18 months: 12%

### NDIS systems and frameworks

1. 3-6 months: 35%
2. 6-12 months: 42%
3. 12-18 months: 23%

### Quality and Safeguards

1. 3-6 months: 35%
2. 6-12 months: 46%
3. 12-18 months: 19%

### Disability workforce

1. 3-6 months: 22%
2. 6-12 months: 42%
3. 12-18 months: 36%

### Inclusive government

1. 3-6 months: 35%
2. 6-12 months: 43%
3. 12-18 months: 22%

### Government partnerships

1. 3-6 months: 25%
2. 6-12 months: 47%
3. 12-18 months: 27%

*Figure 11: Timeframes for priorities across reform outcome areas*

Foundational Supports and partnership with people with disability are seen as immediate priorities with 68% of attendees identifying both these outcome areas within the 3–6-month timeframe. This is followed by Inclusion and Participation (63%) and then to outcome areas with less than fifty percent – Empowerment (43%), NDIS participant experience (42%) and mainstream services (40%). Disaggregated data from the timeframe periods is shown in Figures 12 – 14.

## Conclusion & Next Steps

We acknowledge and thank all those people from across Queensland who participated in the community forums and shared their insights and feedback. Alongside the community forums was an expression of interest process for the Disability Reform Implementation Stakeholder Committee (DRISC) and the Disability Reform Co-design Team (the Co-design Team) which closed on 14 February 2025. We thank everyone who completed an expression of interest. The recruitment process for these groups has been taking place in the weeks following the forums. At the time this report was written, recruitment for the Co-Design team was in progress.

The next steps are to finalise the membership of DRISC, and work with the Department of Families, Seniors, Disability Services and Child Safety (The Department) to establish priority areas for reform. The Department is also working with the Commonwealth and other states and territories on joint reform priorities.

Stay tuned for information about future forums and updates by regularly checking the QDN website and by being a part of the Disability Reform Community of Practice.

Here is a link to the QDN website: <https://qdn.org.au/qld-disability-reforms/>

Here is a link to sign up to the Disability Reform Community of Practice: <https://forms.office.com/pages/responsepage.aspx?id=pN22SPKKGkecMSBHox1OyDuwIiS6O7VKirzKRljqgLZURDRMVEtWOUpYVkNFSlBVWU1ONDlMTVhOTi4u&route=shorturl>

For more information, please contact QDN’s policy team on 1300 363 783 or [admin@qdn.org.au](mailto:admin@qdn.org.au).

### Appendix A: Queensland Disability Reform Framework

Purpose: To implement priority disability reforms arising from the NDIS Review and Disability Royal Commission to achieve sustainable and improved outcomes

1. Disability Reform Enablers
2. Strong national governance frameworks and partnerships
3. Strong reform oversight and reporting
4. Strong stakeholder relationships and structures
5. Effective whole of government commitment and resourcing
6. Inclusion, rights and voices: The rights, voices and participation of people with disability is elevated
   1. Inclusion and participation: Reforms are designed to create a more inclusive Queensland where people with disability participate on an equal basis, with particular focus on employment (Joint with Commonwealth)
   2. Empowerment: People with disability are empowered and their rights are legislated, promoted and upheld, including being supported to exercise autonomy and make decisions (Joint with Commonwealth)
   3. Partnership with people with disability: Reforms are centred on achieving outcomes for people and informed by deep engagement, including co-design of reform implementation (Joint with Commonwealth)
7. Quality services and supports: Queenslanders with disability can access high quality, safe services
   1. Mainstream services: All mainstream services are contemporary, accessible and inclusive and well connected with each other and with the NDIS (Joint with Commonwealth)
   2. Foundational supports: A foundational supports system that meets the needs of Queenslanders with disability, including system navigation and advocacy (Joint with Commonwealth)
   3. NDIS participant experience: Reforms to improve the experience of Queensland participants (Commonwealth led)
   4. NDIS Systems and frameworks: The NDIS delivers efficient and effective NDIS supported across all of Queensland (Commonwealth led)
   5. Quality and safeguards: Regulation is designed to be well integrated and proportionate to achieve improved safety and quality of services across the disability ecosystem (Joint with Commonwealth)
   6. Disability workforce: The disability workforce delivers high-0quality supported and responds to the individual needs of people with disability (Joint with Commonwealth)
8. Commitment and accountability: Strong structures drive outcomes for Queenslanders with disability
   1. Inclusive governance: Strong governance structures that put people with disability at the centre (Joint with Commonwealth)
   2. Government partnerships: National and state agreement underpin effective operation of the disability ecosystem (Joint with Commonwealth)
   3. Evidence and accountability: Quality data and outcomes measurement support accountability (Joint with Commonwealth)
9. Cross cutting priorities
10. Improving outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Queenslanders
11. Integrated services and joined up approaches
12. Addressing intersectional disadvantage
13. Access and equity in regional, remote and rural areas