

Top priorities for 2026-27

Federal Pre-Budget Submission



Australians with disability and their families are facing extremely uncertain times. The Federal Government has made numerous statements about reforms to the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS), including reduced eligibility and funding cuts, but is yet to provide a formal response to the 2023 NDIS Review's recommendations that would help give some clarity about its intentions regarding the way forward. There has also been much discussion about proposed Foundational Supports, a surprise announcement of a Thriving Kids initiative, and promises to revitalise the Information, Linkages, and Capacity Building (ILC) program, but organisations with current grants to deliver these types of supports that end this June have been given minimal information about whether their important programs will continue. Additionally, responses to the Disability Royal Commission's recommendations from all tiers of government have been lacklustre and underwhelming, with little evidence of a concerted effort to end the violence, abuse, neglect, and exploitation of people with disability that the Commission exposed.

Consequently – and quite reasonably – many people with disability feel disappointed, confused, and anxious about what their futures hold. Few would argue that no changes are needed, and the disability community has demonstrated time and again its willingness to work constructively with governments to co-design and deliver sensible reforms. Yet, the way the Federal Government has handled all of these issues has resulted in unnecessary harm and a further breakdown in trust and confidence. There are much better ways to manage change, especially when politicians – not people with disability – are responsible for creating the problems that now need to be fixed, despite the disability community bearing the brunt of recent media commentary and public anger about government failures regarding the NDIS and other systems.

The sense of uncertainty described here only adds to the pressures many Australians with disability are experiencing due to the ongoing housing and cost of living crises. The current housing shortage and dramatic increase in costs are made even worse for people with access needs due to the severe

lack of accessible places to live. Many people with disability are stuck in hospitals, residential aged care facilities, transitional accommodation, or homelessness, while others make do in unsuitable, inaccessible, and sometimes unsafe housing. People with disability are also among those experiencing the worst impacts of the cost-of-living crisis, which will only become more severe with the end of energy bill relief programs especially for those with higher power bills as a direct result of their disability. They are also among those yet to receive any specifically targeted financial relief from governments despite [evidence](#) showing they face higher everyday living costs than non-disabled people. People who rely on the Disability Support Pension (DSP) as their only form of income have told us they are forced to choose between attending medical appointments, filling scripts, or buying food. This is unacceptable in a wealthy country like Australia.

The 2026-27 Federal Budget presents an opportunity for the Federal Government to acknowledge the compounding impacts of all these issues on the disability community and reset how it is handling reform processes. [Genuine co-design](#) should be at the heart of this – not the minimal consultations that governments label as co-design for reasons of political expediency. Genuine co-design will ensure reform processes benefit from the lived experience expertise of people with disability, as well as the insights and ideas of the end-users of government systems. It will also lead to greater public understanding of changes and why they are needed, as well as much needed improvements in the relationship between the Federal Government and the disability community. History tells us that reforms have the greatest chance of success when governments and communities work together – not against one another.

We call on the Federal Government to compile a 2026-27 Budget that demonstrates a sincere commitment to working with the disability community to genuinely co-design solutions that will enable Australians with disability to live reasonable ordinary lives. To assist we have identified a list of priority areas for investment this year. This is not a definitive list of all the issues needing attention. Rather, it is a selection of policy areas requiring action in the federal sphere brought together in a priority list to assist the Government to present a clear coherent plan on the way forward matched with the necessary funding to enable effective co-design and implementation. This Budget will be delivered at the half-way point of *Australia's Disability Strategy 2021-2031* and will be critical to determining whether the commitments within it will become real or are just empty words. If they are to become real, substantive investments are needed now.

Top priority areas for the 2026-27 Federal Budget are:

① Reallocate NDIS reform funding to genuine co-design

Over its past four budgets, the Federal Government has allocated hundreds of millions of dollars to various National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) reform processes: in 2022-23, a budget measure titled *Plan for the National Disability Insurance Scheme*; in 2023-24, a measure called *Improving the Effectiveness and Sustainability of the National Disability Insurance Scheme*; in 2024–25, another measure, this time called *Getting the NDIS Back on Track*; and in 2025-26, yet another measure,

Strengthening the National Disability Insurance Scheme. This appears to be a strategy of spending money to save money but without clearly demonstratable results. What savings have been made in the NDIS seem to come more from cutting plans rather than any reforms to improve the quality or cost effectiveness of the Scheme. The anti-fraud campaign has been running over the same period, but, while important, its [results](#) are yet to match the [rhetoric](#) that many billions of dollars would be saved. Given this track record from the large amount of money already spent on reform processes, there can be little doubt that a genuine co-design approach for a comprehensive and cohesive set of NDIS reforms involving lived experience and subject matter expertise in decision making, implementation, and evaluation would cost much less, be completed in less than four budget cycles, and produce better outcomes for both NDIS participants and the fiscal sustainability of the Federal Budget. After four years, we respectfully argue it is well past time for the Federal Government to commit to genuinely co-designing changes to the NDIS that will work well as a cohesive whole and ensure reforms do not put participant safety at risk.

During this time, the Federal Government has made repeated commitments to co-designing reforms to the NDIS. Yet, the reform process continues without any indication of a genuine overarching co-design process being established, notwithstanding that the National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA) has pursued some initiatives of varying quality regarding specific matters or communications. Without the overarching direction of a lead co-design group responsible for a clear reform agenda, the individual processes of the NDIA seem disjointed and, in some areas, lacking a logical flow. Minister for Disability and the NDIS Mark Butler has made numerous parallel [commitments](#) to “nothing about us without us” but is yet to follow through on these words. We fully endorse the sentiments expressed and call for the 2026-27 Federal Budget to make these a reality through reallocating all the remaining funds assigned to the various budget measures listed above to establishing and delivering a genuine co-design process to produce sensible cohesive NDIS reforms that ensure the Scheme fulfils its original promise and is sustainable for future generations.

Genuinely co-designing NDIS reforms will ensure they reflect a full diversity of input into decision making and are more likely to achieve intended outcomes. Co-design also aligns with Australia’s obligations under Article 4(3) of the United Nations Convention of Rights of People with Disabilities (UNCRPD). As the Treasury would be aware, genuine co-design is an inclusive, collaborative process whereby a diverse range of people with relevant lived experience, interests, and knowledge come together in partnership with governments to provide advice and make decisions about a project, policy, or program. It provides many benefits not just to the development of the program but also for the buy in of intended beneficiaries and the broader community. As highlighted above, we continue to be concerned many of the processes that governments are currently referring to as co-design fall well short of best practice and do not include active involvement of people with disability in decision making. Treasury may find our Guide to Co-Design with People Living with Disability, which was itself co-designed, helpful in considering the essential steps required in undertaking genuine co-design processes. It is available via our [website](#).

Recommendation 1.1: The 2026-27 Federal Budget should reallocate existing funding for National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) reform processes assigned over the past four budgets to

establishing and delivering a genuine co-design process to make decisions about sensible changes to the Scheme that ensure it achieves its original promise and is sustainable for future generations.

② Co-design Thriving Kids and all Foundational Supports

The NDIS Review recommended the creation of a coherent system of Foundational Supports to address the significant unmet needs of people with disability who are not eligible for an individual NDIS plan. Last August, Minister Butler announced the Federal Government's intent that the Thriving Kids initiative would be the first element of Foundational Supports that would be implemented although a financial agreement has not been made with state and territory governments. Unfortunately, as the NDIS was hurriedly rolled out across Australia, governments withdrew funding from their ongoing responsibilities including to provide appropriate supports for autistic children and children with developmental delay; something that has proven to be a grave mistake that now requires urgent attention and resources. In fact, Foundational Supports are not an additional initiative, as has been suggested, but rather a much-needed investment in existing responsibilities after a period of severe neglect. The 2026-27 Budget should set out a clear plan to genuinely co-design all Foundational Supports, including the Thriving Kids initiative, with communities and provide sufficient federal funding over the forward years to meet the Commonwealth's realistic share of the funding responsibilities.

Well-designed and appropriately funded Foundational Supports can deliver many benefits for Australians with disability, as well as their families, informal supporters, allies, the disability sector, governments, the economy, and society. Likewise, the Thriving Kids initiative offers an opportunity to embed a program of supports for children with autism and developmental delay in inclusive mainstream settings that do not involve separating children from their peers. These types of investment could help reduce the need for some people with disability to obtain an individual NDIS plan, because their life chances have improved, or been defended, by accessing Foundational Supports. For this to be achieved, it is crucial for every element of Foundational Supports to be co-designed with Australians with disability, receive consistent and adequate long-term funding, and align with the commitments in *Australia's Disability Strategy 2021-2031*. The recommendations of the DRC, particularly those of the Commissioners with lived experience, should inform the development of Foundational Supports, including specifically excluding funding for new or existing segregated services or programs.

Recommendation 2.1: The 2026-27 Federal Budget should prioritise investment in a clear plan to genuinely co-design Foundational Supports and the Thriving Kids initiative with Australians with disability (not just state and territory governments) and provide a funding pathway over the forward years to fulfil the Commonwealth's realistic share of financial responsibility for their roll out.

Recommendation 2.2: The 2026-27 Federal Budget should continue existing funding arrangements for all services, programs, and supports to be replaced with Foundational Supports, including the Thriving Kids initiative, until such options are fully established and working well in each local area.

This is particularly important in regional, rural, and remote areas of Australia, as well as in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

③ Provide funding certainty for ILC projects immediately

Last year's Federal Budget allocated \$364.5 million over five years, and \$150 million per year ongoing funding, to redesign the Information, Linkages, and Capacity Building (ILC) program, but it appears this process has inexplicably stalled due to the unrelated dispute with state and territory governments over the hospitals and Thriving Kids funding agreement. This is extremely concerning given funding for many existing ILC projects runs out in less than six months. While the opening of a new ILC grant round is said to be imminent, for this process to be done well and for organisations to have a reasonable time to plan for new activities, it is very likely a temporary funding extension will be needed, otherwise hard-won momentum in these projects will be lost. Indeed, the nature of ILC projects is such that there is a critical need for financial continuity that recognises the importance of relationship building over time, which, in turn, enables a deeper transformation of mindsets, more effective knowledge and skill building, and sustainable peer support and leadership development. For some participants in project activities, particularly peer support groups, this connection may be the only link a person has to community and information. At a time of significant change in the NDIS and other areas, losing these connections will be catastrophic for the community. A gap in funding risks severely undermining the significant value that has been built in existing successful projects, which will be to the detriment of the redesigned ILC program. It will be much more expensive to rebuild this than to provide funding certainty for projects throughout the transition period.

Disappointingly, this is the third year in a row that organisations delivering important ILC-funded projects have faced significant uncertainty about the continuation of their work. There has not been an open ILC grant round advertised since September 2023, therefore projects are being sustained on short-term extensions or ad hoc grants. As we have advised the Federal Government previously, the ongoing delivery of high-quality projects is best achieved when there is funding certainty at least six months ahead of when current funding runs out. This provides stability for program participants, ensures experienced staff can be retained, and allows time for activity planning. In the past, application outcomes for open grant rounds have taken up to eight months to resolve, which also points to the very likely need for a temporary funding extension. Even a grant round opened now, will not be concluded before 30 June 2026.

The Federal Government should act immediately with an announcement of temporary funding well ahead of the Budget to provide certainty to ILC-funded projects to support their continuation. This should be additional to the current budget allocation mentioned above to ensure the Government's delayed process does not impact the success of the redesigned program, which needs to start with its full funding allocation available. The Federal Government should also urgently provide information about the redesign of the ILC program to ensure transparency about what types of projects will be eligible for funding and what, if any, alternative arrangements there will be for projects in any streams that are to be discontinued. This is critical to enable organisations to plan how they will continue to deliver these beneficial programs. Given the way similar scenarios have been handled in the past two

years, organisations are understandably nervous about another repeat of the same difficult circumstances and void of information. Again, the lack of certainty going forward remains a source of distress for people with disability, their families and allies, employees, and organisations.

We implore the Federal Government to handle this year's funding cycle with more urgency and full transparency. Treasury needs to work with the Department of Health, Disability, and Ageing to address this problem and provide financial certainty and planning clarity for all affected projects immediately. If organisations cannot inform their staff and communities about the future of these projects imminently, this risks people leaving their jobs, projects losing critical community connections, and participants feeling reluctant to fully engage in projects or undertake forward planning. We are already receiving questions from our staff and external stakeholders about the future of JFA Purple Orange's projects. It is essential that the messy, stress-inducing situation experienced twice already is not allowed to occur yet again. Failing this, affected organisations and communities will be left with no choice but to draw media and public attention to this perpetual problem.

Recommendation 3.1: The 2026-27 Federal Budget should provide funding certainty – to be announced now well ahead of the delivery of the Budget – for all Information, Linkages, and Capacity Building (ILC) projects, ad-hoc funded projects, and other similar programs with current funding ending on 30 June 2026 to ensure continuity and a smooth transition into the redesigned ILC program. Given there is now less than six months of funding remaining, this will very likely require a funding extension, which should be provided as an additional budget measure to ensure the Government's delayed process does not undermine the success of the new program when it launches. Treasury should work with the Department of Health, Disability, and Ageing to ensure funding certainty is provided as a matter of urgency.

4 Boost availability of accessible affordable housing

The challenges so many Australians are facing in finding an affordable place to live are made even more difficult for those with access needs. With Australia's ageing population, it has never been more important to ensure we are building homes that will meet the needs of the future without expensive retrofitting. Therefore, all new housing and substantial renovations should be built to be accessible and highly adaptive to individual needs. The Federal Government should demonstrate leadership by ensuring Commonwealth funds, including through the Housing Australia Future Fund Facility (HAFFF) and National Housing Accord Facility (NHAF), only support the construction of dwellings that comply with the National Construction Code 2022 (NCC 2022) Livable Housing Design Standard without concessions or exemptions. This commitment should apply to all dwellings in all jurisdictions irrespective of the status of NCC 2022 implementation and be supported by an additional commitment that all social housing meets the Australian Building Codes Board's (ABCB) Voluntary Standard for Livable Housing Design: Beyond Minimum, per Recommendation 7.35 of the Disability Royal Commission. People with disability are [more likely](#) than their non-disabled counterparts to live in social housing so a higher standard of accessibility is critical, noting it will take time to build up new

accessible stock as a portion of overall availability given how few accessible dwellings there are among existing stock.

We have concerns about the Federal Government's return to housing policies based on shared equity to assist a very limited number of people to access quasi-home ownership, rather than address the fundamental policy issues affecting low- and middle-income Australians, including many people with disability. There is, at best, mixed evidence regarding the effectiveness of shared equity schemes, particularly for low-income people, with a [report](#) by the Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute (AHURI) highlighting concerns about the risks of people becoming trapped in their house with insufficient equity to move elsewhere, exposure to high levels of debt, and inadequate income to afford basic or emergency maintenance. As the Help to Buy scheme is expected to be capped at 40,000 buyers, it fails to treat all people with like financial circumstances alike, resulting in a quasi-lotto scheme in which Australians with disability are unlikely to benefit proportionally with non-disabled people due to factors such as inaccessible and unfair application processes. Meanwhile, [evidence](#) demonstrates the Federal Government's Home Guarantee Scheme has already driven a surge in house prices in relevant segments of the market. We strongly urge the Federal Government to urgently and seriously engage with the broader fundamental policy problems that are locking Australians, including many people with disability, out of home ownership and will continue to do so for future generations without genuine policy reform.

Recommendation 4.1: The 2026-27 Federal Budget should ensure all Commonwealth housing funding is only used to support builds that are fully compliant with the National Construction Code 2022 (NCC 2022) Livable Housing Design Standard without concessions or exemptions and irrespective of jurisdiction.

Recommendation 4.2: The 2026-27 Federal Budget should commit to all new social housing being built under federal programs adhering to the higher Australian Building Codes Board's (ABCB) Voluntary Standard for Livable Housing Design: Beyond Minimum.

Recommendation 4.3: The 2026-27 Federal Budget should include measures to genuinely address the fundamental policy problems that are locking so many Australians, including people with disability, out of home ownership. These should be prioritised over short-term measures that only assist a select number of people or inflate house prices further.

5 Increase the DSP rate and update work rules

The Federal Government's feeble response to the Senate Community Affairs References Committee's 'Inquiry into the purpose, intent, and adequacy of the Disability Support Pension' (DSP) Final Report provided in October 2024 represents a significant lost opportunity to address the cost-of-living crisis for those who rely on it to afford life's basics. Having delayed the response for a couple of years, the Government stated it was now too late to properly respond and indicated it had simply 'noted' the recommendations without explaining why they are no longer relevant. In fact, inflation and cost increases have only compounded since the Committee's Report was delivered in February 2022.

Likewise, for the ongoing labour shortages that amending and simplifying DSP work rules would help to address.

While welcome media attention has been given to increasing the rate of Jobseeker (and it has been slightly increased in recent budgets), people receiving the DSP are also facing substantial increases in the costs of living and should not be overlooked again. Indeed, a person with disability faces significantly higher costs compared to non-disabled people, with [research](#) from the National Centre for Social and Economic Modelling (NATSEM) in 2019 indicating a household including a person aged 16 and over with disability required an additional \$107 per week to obtain the same standard of living as similar households without a person with disability. This amount would be much higher now. As the Treasury would be aware, the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) does not cover everyday living costs. The current maximum rate of the DSP with supplements for a single person is just \$589.35 per week; an amount that would be extremely hard to get by on even without these additional costs, especially if this is a person's permanent and only source of income throughout their whole adult life (unlike other payments that may be considered temporary). Unfortunately, the much-lauded Economic Inclusion Advisory Committee is yet to undertake a comprehensive review of the DSP, and this should be prioritised to inform long-term policymaking. Alongside this, an immediate increase in the rate of the DSP should be included in the 2026-27 Budget.

The employment rules and requirements of the DSP are currently too complicated and not well understood by many recipients. This creates significant disincentives to doing any amount of paid employment, which needs to be addressed urgently. The process to apply for the DSP is so lengthy and taxing that many recipients regard gaining access as akin to achieving the 'holy grail' and fear losing it if they do any work or attempt to re-enter ongoing employment. The rates of transition from DSP to employment are currently extremely low. The focus on people eligible for the DSP being *permanently unable to work* is counterproductive for individuals, society, and the cost to the budget of income support payments. In effect, the Federal Government has nothing to lose through enabling greater flexibility for people to work to the extent they can – and many want – while receiving the DSP. Lifting work restrictions would encourage people to earn income, even in ad hoc or short-term ways. In some cases, with the security of DSP eligibility, a person may be able to build up to ongoing employment where they can suspend their DSP payments – a win-win result. There is nothing to gain for the budget bottom line in discouraging these outcomes through arbitrary work restrictions whereby the person receives the same DSP payment anyway without working at all.

Given current workforce shortages and the steps taken to allow people receiving the Age Pension to work more hours without penalty, thereby boosting the national labour force, it is an opportune time for the 2026-27 Budget to make equivalent provision for recipients of the DSP. This would help to mobilise underutilised workers, increase productivity, and lift the national workforce participation rate. Indeed, the Economic Inclusion Advisory Committee [recommended](#) the removal of the 30-hour work limit in 2024 to enable greater workforce participation. Making these changes would also have the added benefit of testing how incentives and disincentives impact on the employment outcomes of recipients in order to inform future long-term changes to DSP rules.

JFA Purple Orange strongly believes an increase in the DSP should not be overlooked again in addressing the ongoing cost-of-living crisis. Nevertheless, we are not seeking to pitch the needs of people with disability against those of others in the community. We acknowledge many Australians are currently doing it tough and add our voice to the [broad community consensus](#) to raise the rate of Jobseeker and other income support payments, as well as to increase the income tax-free threshold and the rate and income cap of the low-income tax offset backdated to 1 July 2025 to provide relief to the growing number of ‘working poor’ in Australia. [Data](#) demonstrates that both these issues disproportionately affect people with disability, who, as mentioned above, also face the compounding impact of higher costs arising from disability.

Recommendation 5.1: The 2026-27 Federal Budget should increase the rate of the Disability Support Pension (DSP) to address the rising costs of living and the higher everyday expenses that people with disability face.

Recommendation 5.2: The 2026-27 Federal Budget should be accompanied by changes to the rules for receiving Disability Support Pension (DSP) payments to remove the disincentives for people with disability to work, particularly by:

- increasing the income thresholds so people can earn more from employment without impacting their DSP payments;
- removing the 30-hour work limit; and
- increasing the period that a person can pause their DSP payments, but remain eligible to restart, and make sure this rule is promoted and understood by people on the DSP, many of whom fear the loss of future access to payments if they work any amount.

Recommendation 5.3: The 2026-27 Federal Budget should provide the necessary resources for the Economic Inclusion Advisory Committee to comprehensively review the Disability Support Pension (DSP) and supplements to inform future policymaking.

Recommendation 5.4: The 2026-27 Federal Budget should raise the rate of Jobseeker and other income support payments and increase the income tax-free threshold and the rate and income cap of the low-income tax offset backdated to 1 July 2025 to provide relief to the growing number of ‘working poor’ in Australia; a cohort including a disproportionately high number of people with disability.

6 Commit to a Disability Action Plan to help end violence

The *National Plan to End Violence against Women and Children 2022-2032* is a significant step forward in protecting women and children across our communities. The development of the dedicated ‘Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Action Plan 2023-2025’ under the National Plan is also a very welcome step. However, given that the National Plan highlights that women and children with disability are also more likely to experience violence and that they experience ‘specific forms of gender-based violence including reproductive coercion, forced sterilisation, and forced medical interventions’ (p.36), it is essential that there also be a co-designed Action Plan focused on ending violence against these women and children.

Importantly, this is a recommendation of the DRC (8.23), which highlighted in its [Final Report](#) that the National Plan currently ‘does not identify specific actions to address the drivers of violence against women and girls with disability, the specific experiences of violence against women and girls with disability, or the dearth of accessible supports’ (p.138). We understand the Federal Government’s [response](#) to the DRC commits to ‘applying a disability lens’ to the general First Action Plan although this is yet to materialise despite that Action Plan ending next year. Regardless, this falls well short of the recommendation for a targeted five-year Action Plan and fails to grasp the magnitude of the problem. We strongly believe the Federal Government should reconsider its approach and commit to Recommendation 8.23 in full, with appropriate funding allocated in the 2026-27 Budget to genuinely co-design a ‘Disability Action Plan’ aligned with the second half of the National Plan. Critically, this process needs to give focused attention to people with disability who experience violence and who use violence, as well as the overlap between these. It should ensure a more nuanced understanding is developed regarding the environments, contexts, and conditions where people with disability use violence and how and why this occurs, for example when communication support needs are unmet or in response to experiencing violence, abuse, neglect, or exploitation that may be hidden or dismissed.

Recommendation 6.1: The 2026-27 Federal Budget should invest in a co-designed Action Plan for women and children with disability under the *National Plan to End Violence against Women and Children 2022-2032*, and provide funding in line with that allocated for the ‘Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Action Plan 2023-2025’, adjusted for recent inflation. To achieve this, it should reorientate any existing work on developing a ‘disability lens’ toward the creation of a ‘Disability Action Plan’ aligned with the second half of the National Plan.

7 Fund co-designed transition plans to end segregation

The lacklustre government responses to the [Final Report](#) of the DRC left many people with disability disappointed and disillusioned. There is an urgent need for the Federal Government to reconsider how it responded and the 2026-27 Budget provides an opportunity for a policy reset backed by funding commitments to achieve change. Federal Government leadership on ending segregation and exclusion of people with disability across our society, including in the critical areas of housing, education, and employment, would constitute a step change in policy approach that would have a profound impact on wellbeing and quality of life.

In the DRC Final Report, all Commissioners with lived experience of disability underscored the consequences of segregation, exclusion, and discrimination, and the opportunities and benefits for all Australians that will result from fully including people with disability in our neighbourhoods, communities, schools, and workplaces. This stance is consistent with Australia’s international obligations under the UNCRPD. The Federal Government should take a strong position against disingenuous claims, particularly those of sector lobbyists, that segregated options can constitute ‘choice’. ‘Choices’ made in a context where safe, high-quality, and inclusive alternatives are not available are *not* genuine choices. Segregation is also a severe form of discrimination, and the Federal Government should also step up its commitments to ending discrimination in all forms.

Ending segregation cannot happen overnight – many mainstream settings are simply not yet equipped to enable this to happen effectively. But the 2026-27 Budget can pave the way. The DRC’s majority recommendations in Volume 7 of the Final Report provide clear guidance. Change will require a significant investment of resources and effort in co-designing comprehensive transition plans that maximise outcomes while avoiding adverse consequences. We strongly recommend there be a federally funded national co-ordination function for each area: housing, education, and employment. This would operate like Disability Advocacy Network Australia’s (DANA) federally funded co-ordination role to strengthen the disability advocacy sector. An appropriate organisation/s should be commissioned to fulfil each role, for example the Australian Coalition for Inclusive Education (ACIE) (of which JFA Purple Orange is a member) would be well-suited to undertake a national co-ordination function in support of transforming mainstream education settings to provide genuinely inclusive education. Importantly, the transition must not be rushed before mainstream settings are fully accessible and enabled to provide necessary supports. However, it must also be recognised that establishing clear timeframes for each transition area and stage, as well as final deadlines, is essential to ensure change actually occurs.

Recommendation 7.1: The 2026-27 Federal Budget should fund the creation of co-designed comprehensive national transition plans to end the segregation of people with disability in housing, education, and employment including clear timebound transition stages. It should endorse a final deadline to ensure segregated settings and practices are eliminated nationally within the term of *Australia’s Disability Strategy 2021-2031*.

Recommendation 7.2: The 2026-27 Federal Budget should invest in commissioning a national coordination function to support each transition plan and ensure mainstream housing, education, and employment settings, provisions, policies, and practices are transformed to achieve genuine inclusion that paves the way to end segregation.

Recommendation 7.3: The 2026-27 Federal Budget should specifically preclude any funding for new segregated provisions in housing, education, and employment, including, but not limited to, new group houses (including via individual NDIS budgets), ‘special’ schools and programs, and supported employment options, such as Australian Disability Enterprises (ADEs). All public money should be invested in authentically inclusive infrastructure, services, and programs that provide the foundations for transition plans to succeed.

8 Deliver Australia’s Disability Strategy promises

Australia’s Disability Strategy 2021-2031 sets out the commitments of all tiers of government to create a more inclusive Australia and end discrimination and exclusion. Governments recommitted to these in the 2024 update. However, as occurred in relation to the first Strategy from 2010 to 2020, a lack of funding to implement the actions to achieve progress toward the outcomes are hindering impact. Significant investment is required to ensure good intentions become genuine results. This will be a crucial part of making mainstream settings and services inclusive to enable an end to segregation. As the Strategy passes the half-way point of its term, this effort needs to be ramped up

to ensure its promises are achieved in full by the end of 2031. This will also assist in fulfilling the recommendations of the Disability Royal Commission, something the Federal Government should give much greater attention to, as noted above.

Further, it is essential that progress under the Strategy be monitored, measured, and tracked in a timely way. The Outcomes Framework that accompanies the Strategy underpins this, yet many of the data points identified are not measured frequently enough or are not well-matched to the associated goal. In particular, the Outcome Framework relies heavily on the ABS Survey of Disability, Ageing, and Caring (SDAC), which is not scheduled to occur again until 2028. We understand the recent three-yearly frequency for conducting the SDAC relied on top-up funding to the ABS, which has ceased. At a minimum, this top-up funding provision needs to continue, otherwise a six-year gap between the 2022 and 2028 surveys will severely hamper the measurement of progress toward Strategy outcomes and result in the 2028 data being the last collected during the term of the Strategy that ends in 2031.

While the Strategy's Data Improvement Plan is a step in the right direction, in its current form it is inadequate to ensure robust measurement of outcomes. The Budget should invest in the ABS' data collection capacity. There is a significant opportunity to include disability as a variable in more of the ABS' regular surveys, for example the monthly Labour Force Survey (LFS) that currently measures a range of other characteristics that are less relevant to understanding the state of the labour force, but not disability. Adding additional variables to capture disability data is a cost-effective way of improving data availability about the experiences and life circumstances of Australians with disability.

Recommendation 8.1: The 2026-27 Federal Budget should invest in the actions required to realise the commitments in *Australia's Disability Strategy 2021-2031* in full and on time.

Recommendation 8.2: The 2026-27 Federal Budget should reinstate top-up funding to the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) in order to ensure the three-yearly frequency of the Survey of Disability, Ageing, and Carers (SDAC) can be reestablished. It should also invest new funding in a program of work for the ABS to evaluate and update the variables measured in each of its regular surveys beginning with the monthly Labour Force Survey (LFS).

9 Invest in health to break down access barriers

The escalating inflationary pressures on household budgets in recent years has focused attention on the rising costs of accessing healthcare in Australia. Many people with disability interact with the health system more than non-disabled community members and these higher costs are not met by NDIS funding. The cost of specialist and allied health appointments and difficulties in accessing dental care without encountering out-of-pocket expenses that are unaffordable for those with low incomes are among the many concerns of people with disability. Urgent care clinics are run through contracted private practices with anecdotal evidence suggesting a wide variation in the quality of services and wait times. There is also a need for to increase the accessibility of healthcare settings, information, and arrangements, for example, longer appointments at no extra cost for people with disability who would benefit. As a disability-focused organisation, we are not well-placed to provide specific evidence-based recommendations on the solutions to these issues but strongly encourage the Federal

Government to engage with lived experience and subject matter experts, as well as other relevant stakeholders, about these problems as a matter of priority.

Recommendation 9.1: The 2026-27 Federal Budget should ensure investments addressing the escalating costs and demand pressures for healthcare address the specific needs of people with disability, including the need for health services to be accessible and inclusive for a range of needs.

10 Reinvigorate the transition to fully accessible transport

Accessible transport provides a gateway into all aspects of an ordinary life in community, be it accessing employment, education, health services, shops, recreation facilities, and much more besides. Therefore, it is extremely disappointing that Australia failed to achieve its 20-year targets on delivering accessible public transport that expired in 2022, despite the two-decade-long transition period being an adequate timeframe in which to do so. When the *Disability Standards for Accessible Public Transport 2002* (Transport Standards) were introduced in 2002, they were supposed to ensure that all public transport networks and associated infrastructure, except for the trains and trams, would be fully accessible by the end of 2022 (train and tram conveyances have until 2032 to comply).

This disappointment is compounded by the continuing lax approach to updating the Transport Standards with new deadlines, as well as credible reporting and accountability mechanisms to ensure outcomes are delivered. An exposure draft of the new Transport Standards finally went to public consultation late last year following a development process that began in 2015, but the commencement date remains unclear. The 2026-27 Budget should include resources to reinvigorate the transition, involve people with disability in the genuine co-design of an outcomes measurement framework, and establish an independent monitoring and regular reporting function, for example through the Australian Human Rights Commission (AHRC) or a future National Disability Commission that was proposed by the Disability Royal Commission.

Recommendation 10.1: The 2026-27 Federal Budget should invest in reinvigorating the transition to fully accessible transport through new Transport Standards. It should make financial provision for the genuine co-design and implementation process for a comprehensive framework for auditing and reporting of outcomes to ensure all parties with obligations to meet accessibility requirements are independently and transparently evaluated at least once every three years.

About us

JFA Purple Orange is a purpose-led organisation working towards a more inclusive world where people with disability have access to the same opportunities as everyone else. Our work is characterised by co-design and co-production. Based in South Australia, we undertake systemic policy analysis and advocacy across a range of issues affecting people with disability and their families. We also host a range of peer networks for people with disability including people with intellectual disability, physical and sensory disability, younger people, people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, and people in regional South Australia.

Contact us

To discuss our top priorities for the 2026-27 Federal Budget in more detail, please contact Tracey Wallace, Interim CEO, JFA Purple Orange, on (08) 8373 8333 or traceyw@purpleorange.org.au.