

2024–25

# NSW Pre-Budget Submission





## 2024–25 NSW Pre-Budget

### Five asks for the disability sector

1. Sector support for transformation
2. Enhancing social procurement from supported employment services
3. Sector support for the disability workforce
4. Enhancing housing choice
5. Implement safeguarding initiatives

## About this submission

National Disability Services (NDS) welcomes the opportunity to provide input to government for spending priorities in the 2024-25 NSW Budget.

We advocate for a wide range of policy priorities on behalf of the sector, across NDIS services, pricing and payment reform, workforce development, employment of people with disability, regulatory reform, improved planning, and support pathways, supports for people with disability outside the NDIS, home and living supports and supports for children, young people, and families.

This submission identifies five asks for the 2024-25 NSW Budget and actions that governments can take now to improve the operating environment for disability providers and quality, sustainable services for people with disability.

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## About National Disability Services

National Disability Services (NDS) is the peak body in NSW and Australia for non-government disability service providers. NDS has more than 350 members in NSW and over 1,200 members nationally. Collectively, NDS members operate several thousand services for Australians with all types of disability. Our members employ around 100,000 people and provide a full range of disability services to some 500,000 people with disability. The NDS platform of National Disability Practitioners has over 15,000 individual members across all aspects of the disability workforce.

Our vision is for an inclusive Australia where all people with disability live safely and equitably. To achieve this, people with disability need to access the right supports, at the right time, from the right people, services, and systems.

NDS acknowledges the traditional custodians of the lands, seas, skies, and waterways throughout NSW. We pay respect to elders past and present and recognise their deep and continuing connections with our shared country, culture, and community.

## State of the Disability Sector

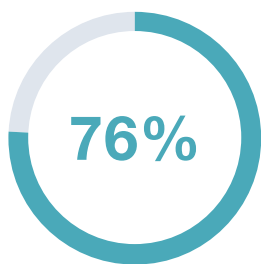
Over 18% of the New South Wales (NSW) community [live with disabilities](#). This equates to 1.37 million people living with disability in NSW. People experience a range of impacts due to disability, with [over 6% of the population experiencing profound or severe disability](#). The NDIS scheme supports 192,668 NSW participants in the Scheme as of December 2023.

The [State of the Disability Sector Report](#) released in December 2023, by NDS, projects an alarming outlook for the future viability of the disability services sector.

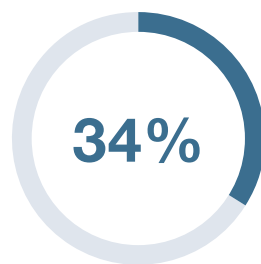
The data shows the disability sector is at breaking point as providers report their worst year ever, with more organisations running a deficit and far fewer breaking even.

Keeping services going is getting harder than ever. Hope persists that current reforms will reverse the trend towards market failure. But time is running out.

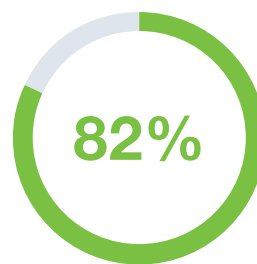
### The report found:



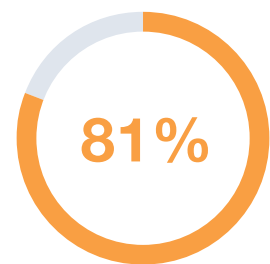
**76 per cent** of NSW not-for-profit providers and 60 per cent of NSW for-profit providers said they worry that they won't be able to provide NDIS services at current prices.



**34 per cent** of providers made a loss in FY 2022-23. **18 per cent** just broke even.



**82 per cent** of respondents said they had received requests for services that they could not fulfill.



**81 per cent** reported extreme to moderate difficulty in finding support workers in NSW, with availability of allied health professionals ranging from low to non-existent.

Following the publication of the Royal Commission into violence, abuse, neglect and exploitation of people with disability recommendations and the NDIS review recommendations, in [December 2023 National Cabinet agreed](#) to a reform agenda to support people with disability in and outside the NDIS scheme. These important reforms will include additional foundational supports at state level. It is therefore essential that investment in the development and growth of quality disability services is a focus for the NSW budget.

# 1. Sector support for transformation

Changes to NSW disability services expected from the NDIS Review and Royal Commission are a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to reform, however sector capacity is limited.

NDS State of the Disability Sector data (2023) shows that while most service providers are focused on improving productivity (94 per cent) and growth (63 per cent), 82 per cent received requests for services they could not fulfill and 62 per cent are worried about their ability to adjust to changes in policy. More than half report that their leadership teams find it difficult to develop strategy in the current environment.

Achieving reforms will require transformation across most aspects of service delivery. Co-designing the roadmap with providers is critical.

Funding is needed for structural adjustment. Funding could assist with the introduction of new navigation models and supports for home and living, managing vacancies, investing in/divesting infrastructure, new regulatory and training requirements delivering trauma informed supports and adapting to new systems, including enhanced incident reporting, digital platforms, and e-markets.

Disability service providers will need to be involved in the design and additionally will need to implement the reform changes. Investment in the disability sector is pivotal to ensuring that the best outcomes are achieved through the reform agenda and that disability service providers can adapt and implement good practice reform changes. NDS is well placed to support the NSW Government across this reform agenda.


As a peak body, NDS has the expertise and provider engagement to support NSW Government with the disability reform agenda.

## Recommendations to NSW government

- 1.1 **Establish a NSW Reform Implementation Taskforce that is sector-led**, including people with disability, advocacy groups and providers. The Taskforce would align with Federal Government taskforce and would advise NSW government on creating a high quality and sustainable sector and develop a NSW Transformation Roadmap.
- 1.2 **Government funding to NDS to employ dedicated sector support officer and focus on sector development** Funding of \$260,000 per annum over 5 years to support one sector support officer at a minimum. Funding can be scaled and expanded to support a network of information and resources for providers and a critical feedback loop to policymakers on sector intelligence and reform progress.



Existing resources



\$260,000 per annum 5 years

## What outcomes will be achieved?

Disability service providers will have a seat-at-the-table to ensure reforms can be safely and practically implemented. Business support programs will help build a viable and sustainable industry, focused on doing new things and adapting to reforms.

With the reform agenda ahead, we need a sector focused on doing new things and adapting to new models of service delivery while continuing to deliver the supports that people with disability need daily. This will take time, codesign and strategic investment.

Sector development investment will provide vital intelligence and analysis to the government through NDS facilitated disability provider networks.

## 2. Strengthening social procurement from supported employment services

Supported Employment Services provide jobs for people with disability who often face the biggest barriers to employment. In Australia there are around 160 registered NDIS providers offering employment options to almost 16,000 people.

Their commercial operations are involved in the production of high-quality products and services, which include some of Australia's best-known brands. Their employees with disability are increasingly involved in many complex supply chains nationally, distributing to thousands of commonly used household products. As well as these commercial and industrial activities, others provide work and training in the community or at the work sites of mainstream employers.

There are large numbers of NDIS participants of workforce age who want to work but cannot find a job. They are a pool of underutilised labour who can bring a wide range of skills, talents, and abilities to NSW workplaces, especially during this time of skills and labour shortages nationally.

### Policy proposals to government

- 2.1 Government should continue to work with NDS to highlight the social impact value of Supported Employment Services, as well as **actively promote BuyAbility** ([buyability.org.au](http://buyability.org.au)) to support increased government and non-government procurement from Supported Employment Services

Existing  
resources

### What outcomes will be achieved?

Financially viable supported employment services that have a steady source of income allocated from government purchasing are more likely to offer an increased range of quality, sustainable employment options for people with disability. More procurement from supported employment services will increase employment of people with disability and the range of quality jobs available. It will also strengthen pathways to mainstream employment by having a stronger and more dynamic sector.



### 3. Sector support for disability workforce

Disability workforce challenges are well-known and immense. It remains one of the fastest growing workforces in Australia. Within the next three years an estimated additional 128,000 workers (a 40 per cent increase on today's workforce) are needed to meet the projected demand on NDIS services. This challenge is compounded by high turnover rates which see many workers leave the sector each year.

The State of the Disability Sector Report released in December 2023, by NDS, projects an alarming outlook for the future viability of the disability services sector with workforce gaps a service delivery critical issue. The report found that:

- **81 per cent** reported extreme to moderate difficulty in finding support workers in NSW, with availability of allied health professionals ranging from low to non-existent.

NDS supports an integrated approach to address workforce challenges across the care and support economy. As Australia's leading peak body representing disability providers, NDS is ideally placed to support the sector and inform government on workforce strategies.

#### Policy proposals to government

- 3.1 **Government establish a NSW Disability Workforce Plan in partnership with NDS** led by the sector, to address the areas of critical need for the disability workforce. NDS would like to see the NSW Disability Workforce Plan include funding to develop disability sector planning across metropolitan and regional NSW and funding to promote disability careers. It should specifically include employment opportunities for people with disability.

Existing  
resources

#### What outcomes will be achieved?

Addressing disability workforce challenges remains a top priority for services providers and governments alike.





## 4. Enhancing housing options

As detailed in the Disability Royal Commission report people with disability face multiple barriers to securing housing that is accessible, secure, appropriate, and safe. A key requirement to appropriate housing is endorsement of the mandatory accessibility standards in the National Construction Code (2022). The mandatory Livable Housing Design Standard (silver standard) requirements focus on basic structural and spatial elements that ensure the future flexibility and adaptability of a home. NSW remains one of the few jurisdictions that have not yet mandated these basic accessibility requirements.

Many group homes are still owned by the NSW Government and this ‘legacy stock’ is ageing. Both the Disability Royal Commission and the NDIS Review reports have highlighted concerns regarding this legacy stock.

### Policy proposals to government

- 4.1 **NSW Government to mandate the Livable Housing Design Standard (silver standard) and work towards the voluntary ‘gold standard’** to provide choice and accessibility housing options to people with disability.
- 4.2 **NSW Government to develop a strategy, in partnership with the disability service providers, for revitalising and fully utilising all SDA owned by NSW Government.**

Existing  
resources

Existing  
resources

### What outcomes will be achieved?

Addressing housing choice and accessibility for people with disability is a fundamental right and opportunity for Government.



## 5. Implement safeguarding initiatives

NDS is committed to assisting disability service providers to understand, implement and improve practices which safeguard the rights of the people they support.

Creating safer, quality services for all people with a disability is the role of all providers.

The NDS Zero Tolerance initiative, if renewed and extended, will ensure ongoing improvements to safeguarding initiatives across disability service providers.

### Policy proposals to government

- 4.1 **New resource to upgrade and extend NDS's Zero Tolerance Initiative**, which was identified by the Disability Royal Commission as a 'promising practice' for disability services. This flagship NDS program aims to prevent violence, abuse, neglect, and exploitation of people with disability. NSW Government funding of \$200,000 will be used for a project officer to develop a NSW specific resource and establish face to face coaching events including specifically in regional NSW.

\$200,000

### What outcomes will be achieved?

Delivering this upgraded NSW project will increase the capability of disability service providers to embed a human rights approach in service delivery, adopt a holistic approach to the prevention of violence, abuse, neglect, and exploitation in different environments. The project works to strengthen the skillset of the disability workforce.

