

Submission by



# **2026-27 Commonwealth Pre-Budget Submission**

**To Australian Government and The Treasury**

**30 January 2026**

## About Queensland Advocacy for Inclusion

Queensland Advocacy for Inclusion (QAI) is a Disabled Peoples Organisation. We are an independent, community-based advocacy organisation and community legal service that provides individual and systems advocacy for people with disability. Our purpose is to advocate for the protection and advancement of the needs, rights, and lives of people with disability in Queensland. QAI's Management Committee is comprised of a majority of persons with disability, whose wisdom and lived experience guides our work and values.

QAI has been engaged in systems advocacy for over thirty-five years, advocating for change through campaigns directed at attitudinal, law and policy reform.

QAI also provides individual advocacy services in the areas of human rights, disability discrimination, guardianship and administration, involuntary mental health treatment, criminal justice, NDIS access and appeals, and disability advocacy for young people with disability including in relation to education. Our individual advocacy experience informs our understanding and prioritisation of systemic advocacy issues.

Since 1 January 2022, QAI has also been funded by the Queensland Government to establish and co-ordinate the Queensland Independent Disability Advocacy Network (QIDAN).<sup>1</sup> QIDAN members work collaboratively to raise the profile of disability advocacy while also working towards attitudinal, policy and legislative change for people with disability in Queensland.

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<sup>1</sup>QIDAN (2025). <https://qidan.org.au/>

## QAI's recommendations

### **The Commonwealth Government must urgently invest in Disability Advocacy as below:**

1. QAI is seeking a **\$4 million** investment to support Queenslanders with disability to access individual disability advocacy regardless of their location or disability. This includes targeted support for First Nations people, children and young people, culturally and linguistically diverse communities, people experiencing domestic and family violence and LGBTIQ+SB people.
2. Immediately increase funding for the NDIS Appeals Advocacy Program by **20%** to ensure people with disability across Australia can access equitable representation and support through the Administrative Review Tribunal (Tribunal) processes. In addition, provide **\$100,000** to support a national community of practice for NDIS Appeals Advocates.
3. Invest **\$2.9 million** over 2 years to fund the establishment phase of a National Disability Rights Community Legal Centre. Followed by ongoing operational support to enable national impact.

### **To improve the lives of people with disability and our greater communities, the Government must also invest in:**

4. Disaster preparedness and resilience: ensure 20% of all disaster preparedness funding is dedicated to people with disability.
5. Foundational Supports: commit national funding to the implementation and establishment of foundational supports, particularly for people with psychosocial disability support needs and people with chronic health and mobility conditions.
6. An inclusive national response for people experiencing domestic and family violence, in response to DRC Recommendation 8.23.2
7. Supporting an Australian Human Rights Act.

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<sup>2</sup> Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People with Disability (2023). *Final Report*, Volume 8, Criminal justice and people with disability, p 378-382.

## Fund disability advocacy

Queensland has nine independent disability advocacy organisations that receive state funding, and in some instances national funding, to navigate local, state and Commonwealth systems, including the NDIS, Centrelink, education, health, housing, justice, transport and safeguarding pathways. In the 2024–25 financial year more than 40% of all individual advocacy services delivered through the Queensland state funded program related to the NDIS.<sup>3</sup> Other leading issues that advocates addressed during the year included income support, restrictive practices and reporting mechanisms for abuse and neglect.

In the 2024-25 financial year, QAI alone, as a disability organisation and community legal centre, assisted people with disability in more than 6,000 matters, and turned people away in more than 3,500 instances usually due to lack of capacity to assist.<sup>4</sup>

We call the Australian Government and the Treasury to invest an additional **\$4 million** in federal funding as an equity boost to disability advocacy in Queensland.

### Demand

People who seek disability advocacy face issues that are rarely discrete and singular. The issues are complex and often overlap with other issues, therefore ongoing and skilled advocacy can be essential for resolution to be achieved. Face-to-face advocacy is often the preferred mode of advocacy and can be crucial for certain people. For instance, face-to-face advocacy is essential for people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds with disability who require interpreters and culturally safe practice, and for people with complex communication needs who cannot engage meaningfully through online or time-limited models. The need for face-to-face advocacy is even higher in regional, rural and remote locations across Queensland where there needs to be an increase in opportunities to access advocacy, given the remoteness and inaccessibility of their location, inconsistent means of communication, lack of knowledge about what advocacy is and how it can help.<sup>5</sup> This is

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<sup>3</sup> QIDAN (2025). *Response to the Disability Safeguards Consultation Paper*: <https://qidan.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2025/12/20251219-QIDAN-Response-to-the-Disability-Safeguards-Consultation-Paper.pdf>

<sup>4</sup> QAI (2025). *Annual Report 2024-25*: <https://qai.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2026/01/2025-Annual-Report-Accessible.pdf>.

<sup>5</sup> QIDAN (2025). *Report on the Remote Locations Pilot*: <https://disabilitypathways.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2025/04/Remote-Locations-Pilot.pdf>

usually aggravated by issues like social isolation, experiences of mental health issues and distress, and limited access to disability-related services and supports.<sup>6</sup>

Timely access to advocacy enables risks to be identified, addressed and resolved before they escalate into crisis, statutory intervention or acute system involvement. This early-intervention and preventative function directly supports government safeguarding obligations and delivers long-term value for money by reducing reliance on emergency responses and tertiary service systems.

The DRC determined that

**the cost ratio of advocacy is at a minimum  
\$2.21 of benefit for every \$1 spent on funding.<sup>7</sup>**

An additional \$4 million investment in federal funding as an equity boost to disability advocacy in Queensland would see targeted support for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, children and young people, culturally and linguistically diverse communities, people experiencing domestic and family violence and LGBTIQ+ people, and people living in regional, rural and remote Queensland as addressed in QIDAN's submission to the IDAP consultation.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> Taylor Fry and the Centre for International Economics (2023). *Increased funding to meet demand for disability advocacy services*: <https://disability.royalcommission.gov.au/system/files/2023-09/Increased%20funding%20to%20meet%20demand%20for%20disability%20advocacy.pdf>

<sup>8</sup> QIDAN (2026). *Submission to IDAP consultation*. <https://qidan.org.au/submissions/qidan-submission-to-idap-consultation/>

## NDIS Appeals Advocacy funding boost

QAI is funded by the Australian Government through the NDIS Appeals Program and provides a Statewide service for people accessing or appealing a decision of the NDIA at the Administrative Review Tribunal (Tribunal). The QAI team are well-regarded nationally for our knowledge, expertise and service. Last financial year we provided services to over 230 people at the Tribunal.

We are calling for:

- An **immediate 20% uplift** to the NDIS Appeals Program nationally to account for inflation, securing the existing national workforce and to support the increased demand.
- Specific funding **of \$100,000 per annum** to support QAI to continue to run a National NDIS Appeals Community of Practice (NDIS Appeals CoP) which:
  - Hosts monthly meetings with NDIS Appeals Advocates, that are attended by senior case managers and lawyers from the NDIS bi-monthly,
  - Provides a forum for training and practice improving, monitoring trends and collecting important feedback for the current complex reform of the NDIS
  - Provides advice, guidance and support by QAI's senior experienced lawyers and advocates to individual advocates from across Australia when they are experiencing particularly challenging or novel matters.
  - Hosts shared resource material for NDIS Appeals nationally.

Funding for this service at the existing base level has just been extended to 30 June 2028. No supplementary funding has been announced following 30 June 2026. The current funding received by QAI for the 2025-2026 year is only \$5,593 more than received, 2 years ago in 2023-2024 and \$3,884 less than the 2024-2025 year – notwithstanding significant inflationary costs over those three years, increasing demand and complexity of the issues.

## Demand

The number of reviews made to the Tribunal in the 2024-25 financial year were at a historical high. The trend is not slowing with the July to November 2025 period showing the Tribunal had 6,703 NDIS applications on hand (~3,000 more than the previous period).<sup>9</sup>

The Tribunal, NDIA, Legal Aid Commissions and the advocacy organisations funded under the NDIS Appeals Program are struggling to meet the enormous demand within a funding package that has not increased since the 2023-24 financial year. For example, last December QAI reopened our booking system and filled up 3 months of appointments within 24 hours.

A minimum immediate 20% increase in funding for all NDIS appeals and advocacy programs out to 30 June 2028 to **secure the existing workforce** and to assist with the immediate pressing demand is crucial so that people with disability can access equitable advocacy.

Without assistance in this space, people with disability face significant barriers, including:

- Power imbalance and procedural complexity, as participants must navigate complex legislation while the NDIA is legally represented.
- Challenges obtaining and presenting expert evidence, including clinical and functional assessments.
- Barriers to self-advocacy, particularly for people with cognitive, psychosocial, or intellectual disability.
- Reduced ability to negotiate fair outcomes, leading to acceptance of inadequate supports.

Applicants supported by skilled advocates through the Tribunal are more likely to understand the process, improving the efficiency of the Tribunal. Both the NDIA and the Tribunal are overwhelmed with the numbers of NDIS applicants at the Tribunal. Skilled advocates can ease that burden.<sup>10</sup> Unfortunately, due to the lack of resources, the vast majority of NDIS appeals applicants are not getting the help they need to navigate a complex system.

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<sup>9</sup> Administrative Review Tribunal (2025). *ART Caseload Report, For the period 14 October 2024 to 30 June 2025*: [https://www.art.gov.au/sites/default/files/2024-12/ART\\_Caseload\\_2024-25.pdf](https://www.art.gov.au/sites/default/files/2024-12/ART_Caseload_2024-25.pdf). Shows a total of 3,594 matters on hand. NDIS (2026). *Quarterly Report to disability ministers Q1 2025-26*, Figure 20, page 55: <https://www.ndis.gov.au/media/8160/download?attachment>

<sup>10</sup> Client feedback to QAI (2025): *It was all good. I will be lost with the legal language without you all.*

## Establish a National Disability Rights Community Legal Centre

A National Disability Rights Community Legal Centre will bring together community-based lawyers specializing in the human rights of people with disability, which can target consultations and feedback to government through the lens of State, Federal and international law. Community lawyers work with people facing the greatest barriers to inclusion, including people in closed environments for whom a lawyer may be their only point of contact. Existing Community Legal Centres offer decades of experience in promoting the rights and dignity of people with disability.

A well-funded National Disability Rights Community Legal Centre would:

- coordinate free legal help,
- produce nationally relevant community legal education; and
- advocate for national policy and legislative reform.

To be clear, this funding will not be used to deliver individual legal help to people with disability, as organisations are already funded to do this by the Attorney General. Rather, this funding will collate and enliven these individual stories, using our collective expertise to amplify and contextualize them.

A consortium of community legal centres from around Australia came together to propose a national Disability Rights Community Legal Centre in response to the release of Disability Representative Organisation funding in 2024. Our proposal was supported by existing Disability Representative Organisations. The proposal was not successful at the time due to falling outside the intention of the specific funding grant.

We are calling for the Australian Government and the Treasury to invest **\$2.9 million over 2 years** to fund the establishment phase of a national Disability Rights Community Legal Centre, followed by an ongoing operational support.



# Improving the lives of people with disability and our greater communities

## **Dedicated funding for disability disaster preparedness and resilience**

Queensland is widely recognised as Australia's most disaster impacted state. People with disability are disproportionately affected by disasters due to reliance on supports, assistive technology, accessible transport, clear communication, and coordinated services. Despite this, disaster preparedness, response, and recovery systems are not consistently designed with disability inclusion at their core, and subsequently the systemic barriers experienced by people with disability can become life threatening.

During severe weather events in 2025, disability advocacy organisations and information services in Queensland reported a significant shift in demand and complexity of enquiries, highlighting both the fragility of existing systems and the critical role of disability specific information, advocacy, and preparedness support during disasters.<sup>11</sup> For example, people with physical disabilities were not able to collect sandbags from their local depot and there were no options for sandbags to be delivered. In other instances, people with both psychosocial and physical disabilities had to evacuate their homes which are located in flood prone areas but had to stay at an accessible hotel room (which are usually unavailable) as there was no other emergency accommodation available.

**Dedicating 20%** of all disaster preparedness federal funding to people with disability reflects the portion of the population with disability to addresses the specific needs in Queensland as Australia's most disaster-prone state.<sup>12</sup> This funding could strengthen disaster preparedness for all Queenslanders with disability by providing education, information, and advocacy as well as establish accessible services such as emergency and evacuation centres.

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<sup>11</sup> Disability Advocacy Pathways' (2025). *Report – Reflections from Pathways' response to Cyclone Alfred*: <https://disabilitypathways.org.au/report-reflections-from-pathways-response-to-cyclone-alfred/>

<sup>12</sup> AIHA (2024). *People with disability in Australia*: <https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/disability/people-with-disability-in-australia/contents/people-with-disability/prevalence-of-disability>

## Foundational Supports

We acknowledge that in December 2023, National Cabinet agreed that the Australian Government and state and territory governments would work together to deliver system-wide structural health reform and work to secure the future of the NDIS, including jointly designing and funding Foundational Supports for people with disability. At that time, an amount of \$4 billion was set for children aged 0-8 to be equally shared between states and territories and the Commonwealth with a cap of \$2 billion each. Since then, the Australian Government announced the Thriving Kids program and a \$2 billion federal contribution. We welcome the Australian Government's interest and investment in supports for children with disability outside the NDIS.

Despite this investment into Foundational Supports for children with disability, there has been little transparency on the other steps taken to provide supports to people with disability outside the NDIS. We are aware that up to December 2025 there have been negotiations between the National Health Reform Agreement (NHRA) and the NDIS and Foundational Supports. We also understand the current interim NHRA agreement runs until June 2026 and then it will be a five-year period of funding certainty for states and territories.<sup>13</sup> No public information is available to confirm whether an agreement has been reached up to date in terms of allocation of funds for Foundational Supports.

The NDIS Independent Review recommended Targeted Foundational Supports to deliver:<sup>14</sup>

- Action 1.9: Home and community care support programs
- Action 1.10: Aids and equipment
- Action 1.11: Assistance to people with severe and persistent mental ill-health
- Action 1.12: Early supports for children
- Action 1.13: Programs and initiatives to support young people aged 9-21

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<sup>13</sup> Australian Parliament (2025). *Hansard Committee on 10/10/2025*:  
[https://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary\\_Business/Hansard/Hansard\\_Display?bid=committees/estimate/29004/&sid=0005](https://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Hansard/Hansard_Display?bid=committees/estimate/29004/&sid=0005)

<sup>14</sup> Commonwealth of Australia (2023). *NDIS Review*:  
<https://www.ndisreview.gov.au/sites/default/files/resource/download/working-together-ndis-review-final-report.pdf>

In June 2024, QAI provided advice to the Queensland Government on behalf of QIDAN on the development of a disability Targeted Foundational Supports Service System, but we have not received any updates since.<sup>15</sup>

The most recent NDIS data reveals that in the first 2025-26 quarter 8,895 people left the scheme, which represents double the number of people who left the NDIS in the previous quarter, when 4,139 people left the NDIS.<sup>16</sup> Further data reveals that by the first quarter of 2024-25 a total of 59,221 people had left the NDIS. Twelve months later, by the first quarter of 2025-26, a total of 82,491 people had left the NDIS – that is more than 20,000 people who left the NDIS in twelve months.<sup>17</sup> There is no further data publicly available breaking down the reasons for people leaving the NDIS, however in our experience many people have had their NDIS participant status revoked. This is extremely concerning given that while people exit the NDIS, no other supports are available to meet their needs.

We urge the Australian Government and Treasury to invest in Foundational Supports for all cohorts identified in the NDIS Independent Review, so people with disability have access to adequate supports that meet their needs outside the NDIS.

### **Domestic and Family Violence national response**

For decades, independent disability advocacy organisations have raised awareness of the disproportionate impact that domestic and family violence (DFV) has for people with disability and the rising rates of disclosure. This includes the disproportionate rate of DFV, the unique types of abuse and violence people with disability experience, and barriers to accessing inclusive and accessible services and supports. We also know that the DFV sector struggles to keep up with demand, and we have heard from people with disability that these services are often unable to provide accessible services, further isolating and marginalising people with disability. This experience is not unique to Queensland.

The Australian Government response to DRC Recommendation 8.23 (Action plan to end violence against women and children with disability) lacks detailed achievements to date,

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<sup>15</sup> QIDAN (2024). *Submission Targeted Foundational Supports*: <https://qidan.org.au/submissions/qidan-submission-targeted-foundational-supports/>

<sup>16</sup> NDIS (2026). *Quarterly report supplements*: [https://dataresearch.ndis.gov.au/reports-and-analyses/quarterly-report-supplements?\\_gl=1\\*38hfe3\\*\\_gcl\\_au\\*MTE2Njc5MjA3LjE3Njg1NDQzNDA](https://dataresearch.ndis.gov.au/reports-and-analyses/quarterly-report-supplements?_gl=1*38hfe3*_gcl_au*MTE2Njc5MjA3LjE3Njg1NDQzNDA).

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

and what steps will be taken in the future.<sup>18</sup> We call the Australian Government and Treasury to adequately invest in a national response, which should include an accessible and clear roadmap, to addresses domestic and family violence experienced by people with disability.

### **The call for an Australian Human Rights Act**

Australia remains the only democratic country in the world without a constitutionally enshrined or legislated national bill or charter of rights.<sup>19</sup> The Parliamentary Joint Committee on Human Rights inquiry into Australia's human rights framework reported in May 2024 their recommendation for a Human Rights Act, including an example of a Human Rights Bill 2024.<sup>20</sup>

The DRC made specific recommendations to enable an act to protect the rights of people with disability.<sup>21</sup> In July 2024, a joint statement of 12 disability representative organisations advocating for a Human Rights Act shows the support and the benefits of it for all Australians, instead of developing a specific Disability Rights Act.<sup>22</sup> Creating a Human Rights Act is a mechanism that allow people with disability to do what everybody else does, which would be to enjoy human rights available to all Australians. Therefore, we call for the creation of an Australian Human Rights Act to provide for a more complete and streamlined equality framework that safeguards and promotes fundamental human rights, including for people with disability. This is one of the most critical reforms needed to protect people with disability from violence, abuse, neglect and exploitation.

Furthermore, as one of the 151 civil society organisations calling for an Australian Human Rights Act, QAI echoes and supports the submission prepared and lodged on behalf of the Coalition.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Australian Government (2025). *DRC Recommendation 8.23*: <https://www.health.gov.au/resources/publications/disability-royal-commission-progress-report-2025/volume-8-criminal-justice-and-people-with-disability/recommendation-823-action-plan-to-end-violence-against-women-and-children-with-disability>

<sup>19</sup> Cassandra Le Good & Professor Azadeh Dastyari (2025). *Legislating Human Rights Act From Whitlam to Now*: <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/660249bd40e1686fe5cab7d1/t/68e85848401e4b7ec625a767/1760057416262/Human+Rights+Acts+from+Whitlam+to+Now+%5BOnline+Copy%5D.pdf>

<sup>20</sup> Parliamentary Joint Committee on Human Rights (2024). *Inquiry into Australia's human rights framework*, Recommendations 1 to 4.

<sup>21</sup> DRC (2023). *Final report – Volume 4, Realising the human rights of people with disability*, p. 131.

<sup>22</sup> Women with Disabilities Australia (2024). *Strengthening protection of the rights of people with disability through a national Human Rights Act (HRA)*: <https://wwda.org.au/our-resources/publication/strengthening-protection-of-the-rights-of-people-with-disability-through-a-national-human-rights-act-hra/>

<sup>23</sup> <https://www.humanrightsact.org.au/>