Submission in response to the public consultation on the Australian Disability Strategy

Friday 30 October 2026

Physical Disability Council of NSW

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1. About the Physical Disability Council of NSW

The Physical Disability Council of New South Wales (PDCN) is the peak advocacy organisation for people with physical disabilities in NSW. For over 30 years, PDCN has championed lived experience of physical disability, advocating for the benefits of accessibility and inclusion across government and business, driving systemic reform.

The community we represent includes those living with spinal cord injury, cerebral palsy, muscular dystrophy, multiple sclerosis and other degenerative conditions, people who are blind or have low vision, people who are Deaf or hard of hearing, a person with an amputation or limb difference, short stature, polio, paraplegia, quadriplegia, spina bifida, motor neurone disease, arthritis, Parkinson's disease, acquired brain injury, or someone who has suffered a stroke, chronic pain and autoimmune condition.

Most people with disabilities in Australia have a physical disability. In accordance with the Australian Bureau of Statistics there are approximately 5.5 million Australians (21.4% of the Australian population) living with a disability and over three-quarters (75.3 per cent) of the 5.5 million reported a physical disorder as their main condition.1

Our 2024-2027 Strategy

PDCN believes reform is most powerful when it is driven by lived experience. People living with physical disabilities are experts in the opportunities and barriers they face. By placing this expertise at the centre of our work, we are not only removing barriers to participation, but also creating value for the disability community, government, business, and wider Australian society.

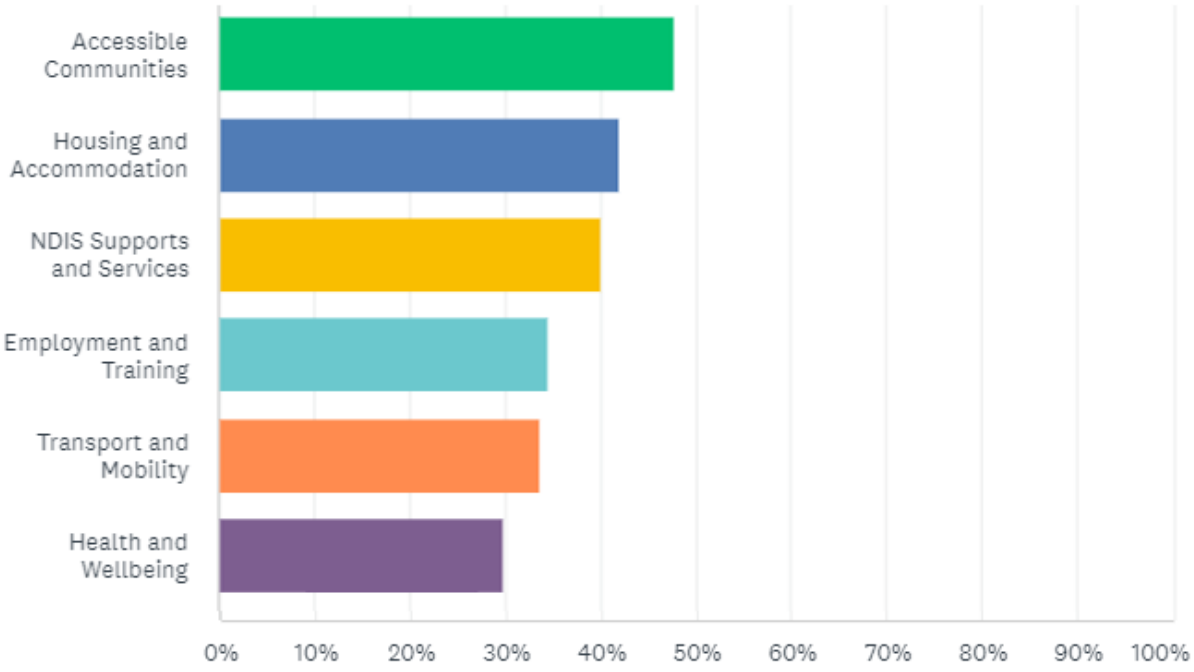
Community-led Advocacy

To ensure our new strategy reflects the real needs of our community, PDCN undertook a comprehensive consultation process. More than 300 members of the physical disability community contributed through surveys and focus groups.

Participants identified six key advocacy priority areas for reform, as depicted in the bar graph below:

[1] Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) Disability, Ageing and Carers, Australia: Summary of Findings, 2022 | Australian Bureau of Statistics (abs.gov.au) accessed 10 July 2024

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1. **Accessible communities** – inclusively designed environments, products and services.
2. **Housing** – increased availability of accessible housing and accommodation.
3. **Physical Disability Supports: NDIS and Foundational Supports** – a stronger disability supports system that meets the needs of people with physical disabilities in NSW
4. **Employment and training** – fair access to meaningful work opportunities.
5. **Transport and mobility** – reliable, inclusive, and accessible public transport.
6. **Health and wellbeing** – equitable access to health services across NSW.

PDCN also convenes the NSW Disability Advocacy Network (NDAN), which is a network of 23 disability advocacy organisations across NSW. As a collective we advocate for people with physical disability, intellectual disability, psychosocial disability, people who are neurodiverse, have sensory disabilities, and disability intersectionality across First Nations, LGBTQIA+ and culturally and linguistically diverse communities. NDAN is funded by the NSW Department of Communities and Justice. Collectively we deliver systemic, representative and individual disability advocacy services across the state and represent people with disabilities in NSW at the national level.

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2. Executive Summary

The Physical Disability Council of NSW (PDCN) welcomes the opportunity to provide feedback on the mid-point review of the Australian Disability Strategy 2021-2031. Since the Strategy was launched in 2021, governments have received significant guidance on improving outcomes for people with disability through both the Disability Royal Commission and the NDIS Review. These processes identified many of the barriers faced by people with disabilities, including people with physical disabilities. The Disability Royal Commission and NDIS Review provided a blueprint for reform, but people with physical disabilities in NSW are not yet experiencing the level of change promised by the Australian Disability Strategy.

There have been some positive developments in the life of the Strategy. Public transport infrastructure accessibility in NSW has continued to improve, protections for users of the Taxi Transport Subsidy Scheme have been strengthened, and governments have continued to invest in some disability and health services. Despite these developments, the feedback PDCN continues to receive from people with physical disabilities across NSW suggests that progress is falling short of community expectations. Many of the issues people raised at the beginning of the Strategy remain unresolved today. Access to suitable housing, reliable transport, appropriate disability supports and access to healthcare services continues to be a challenge for many people with physical disabilities, particularly those living in regional and rural NSW.

PDCN is particularly concerned about the NSW Government's ongoing failure to adopt mandatory Livable Housing Design Standards for all new homes and the uncertainty around the design, availability and adequacy of Foundational Supports for people with physical disabilities who are not eligible for the NDIS. As NDIS supports start to recede, there is growing pressure on informal carers and increasing reliance on unpaid supports to fill gaps in service systems.

There are also ongoing barriers to healthcare, specialist services and preventative health supports, particularly in regional communities. An exciting development in health has been the NSW Government commitment to developing the first NSW Health Disability Strategy which is being co designed with disability advocacy organisations. This presents an opportunity for other governments to adopt a similar approach to ensure lived experience drives health outcomes. There is also a need for disability-inclusive emergency planning and disaster preparedness across government systems.

As the Strategy enters its second half, PDCN believes the focus must shift to implementing solutions and measuring outcomes. People with physical disabilities should be able to see

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tangible improvements in their daily lives as a result of the Strategy. This submission outlines PDCN's key concerns and recommendations across housing, transport, personal and community support, and health.

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3. Housing

Summary

Progress in housing for people with physical disabilities in NSW has been limited since 2021. People with physical disabilities continue to have difficulty accessing homes, with NSW remaining one of only two states in NSW to not adopt mandated Livable Housing Design Standards (LHDS) for all new build homes under the National Construction Code. Across disability advocacy organisations in NSW that form the NSW Disability Advocacy Network, in 2025 housing was the second biggest problem for people with disabilities across the state[2].

There have been slight improvements in some housing for people with disabilities, with all newly built social housing to be built to the LHDS. This, however, only applies to households that require social housing, and does not apply to the broader housing market that people with disabilities should be able to access. There is additional movement on housing with the NSW Housing Pattern Book adopting the LHDS in all its designs. While this is positive, the NSW Housing Pattern Book is optional, and often only utilised by people who can afford to build their own home. There is also no data that PDCN has access that demonstrates how often these designs are implemented.

Accessing appropriate housing for people with physical disabilities remains difficult due to the refusal of the NSW government to commit to LHDS standards across all new builds. If these universal accessible standards are not mandated across the board, people with physical disabilities will continue to face difficulties in accessing suitable and safe housing, leading to a poorer quality of life and a lack of genuine choice and control.

Feedback from the NSW physical disability community

A recent search conducted in October 2026 showed a total of 23277 rental properties available across NSW, of those only 13 listings had accessibility features such as step-free entry, wider hallways, and roll in shower[3]. In NSW, 18% of people (1.37 million) live with a disability[4], and by 2061, 1 in 4 people will be aged 65 or older[5]. This lack of accessible properties in the private rental market is a major limiting factor for people living with physical disabilities in NSW.

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[2]Physical Disability Council of NSW (2026), *Key Issues Facing NSW Disability Advocacy Organisations,* https://www.pdcnsw.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2026/08/Key-issues-facing-NSW-disability-and-advocacy-organisations.pdf

[3] RealEstate.com.au (2026), *Rental Properties and Real Estate in NSW,* accessed 28th October 2026, <https://www.realestate.com.au/>

4 Australian Bureau of Statistics, Disability, Ageing and Carers, 2015 <www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/mf/4430.0, which includes the data cubes for tables in NSW (released 12 January 2017)> accessed 20 September 2021

5 NSW Treasury, the population of NSW in 2061, 2021 22 NSW Intergenerational Report <The population of New South Wales in 2061 | NSW Treasury.> accessed 26 July 2023

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"In several weeks of searching [for a rental property] …. not one of the properties we saw was suitable for someone with a power chair and no walking ability at all, in that we didn't see any [properties] that were ground floor with flat access. In the price range we looked at, first floor with a lift and good stairs was the best we found. Only one listing mentioned disability access - to say there was none." (Access Denied, PDCN 2022)[6].

With a 60% chance any home will house someone with a disability during its life, it is essential that homes are built to meet real community needs.[7] It is also not a huge cost burden to implement accessibility standards for building homes, with data showing that building accessible homes costs less than 1% more upfront and saves money later.[8] It's 22 times cheaper to include features now than to retrofit later, saving costs for homeowners, renters, and governments.[9]

Due to the lack of accessible housing available, people with physical disabilities are often forced to choose housing that does not meet their needs, limiting independence and increasing social isolation.

"I was moved to a property with 26 stairs and stayed for three years. I just had to stay up there (in the home) or go down the stairs on my backside." (Access Denied, PDCN 2022).

"When I first came home from hospital my son had to carry me upstairs at the front of the house. I wish I could have a ramp for my mobility scooter. Steps mean I can't get it inside." (Access Denied, PDCN 2022)[10].

The lack of appropriate housing for people with physical disabilities in NSW is an ongoing issue. The implementation of LHDS for new build homes under the National Construction Code would be a huge benefit to increasing the independence, and housing choice and control for people with physical disabilities.

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[6] Physical Disability Council of NSW (2022), *Access Denied: the experiences of people with physical disabilities across the housing sector,* https://www.pdcnsw.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/Access-Denied-Final-PDCN-BBH.pdf

7 Smith, S., Rayer, S., & Smith, E. (2008) Ageing & disability: Implications for the housing industry and housing policy in the United States. Journal of the American Planning Association, 74:3, 289 – 306

8 https://ncc.abcb.gov.au/sites/default/files/resources/2022/Accessible-housing-estimated-cost-impact-of-proposed-changes-to-NCC.pdf (Accessed November 2024)

9 New Zealand Ministry of Social Development 2009

[10] Access Denied, ibid

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Recommendations

Recommendation 1: The NSW Government to adopt mandatory Livable Housing Design Standards for all new build homes in NSW. The Australian Government should embed incentives in national housing programs that require new homes to be built to the Livable Housing Design Standards.

Recommendation 2: The NSW Building Commission to track and publish quarterly data relating to the utilisation of NSW Housing Pattern Book designs that meet Livable Housing Design Standards.

Recommendation 3: The Australian Government should improve national housing data collection through the inclusion of disability-focused questions in the Census and other relevant datasets to better understand housing trends, accessibility levels, unmet housing need, and the experiences of people with disability across Australia.

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4. Transport

Summary

Transport for people with physical disabilities in NSW has seen some improvements over the past five years. As stated by Transport for NSW on the website for the Safe Accessible Transport program, "as of 19th June 2026, 72.32 per cent of Sydney Trains, Intercity, and Regional stations, and 76.92% of Sydney Harbour Ferries wharves are now independently accessible."[11] While this is an improvement to the accessibility of public transport across the state, the compliance target for the full completion of this program was 2022, making accessible transport in NSW four years behind schedule. The accessibility of public transport in NSW has continued to slowly increase, however it is concerning that completion deadlines are consistently missed by Transport for NSW.

Wheelchair accessible taxis (WATs) and the Taxi Transport Subsidy Scheme (TTSS) have been longstanding issues for people with disabilities. A severe shortage of WATs is of significance to the physical disability community as there are limited alternatives for some cohorts of physical disability. Power wheelchair users often rely solely on WATs, as rideshare services like Uber and Didi don't meet accessibility standards or provide vehicles which can accommodate power wheelchairs. Public transport, especially in regional areas, also falls short of meeting the needs of people with physical disabilities. There has been some improvement in this space through the introduction and implementation of the $30 million Emergency Package over two years to improve the supply of Wheelchair Accessible Taxis, however this improvement is slow, ongoing and often lacking in transparency. Alongside this, issues with TTSS refusals for passengers with disabilities have been an ongoing issue, however recent changes to penalties have seen some improvement.

Feedback from the NSW physical disability community

Supply of Wheelchair Accessible Taxis

PDCN has found that, due to a severe WAT shortage, people with physical disabilities in NSW have been faced with up to three-hour waits or unable to secure Wheelchair Accessible Taxis (WATs), leaving many stranded and unable to attend essential appointments (PDCN Member Survey, 2023). The $15million emergency package to support WATs in NSW was a much-needed boost to improve services for people with physical

[11]Transport for NSW (2026), *Safe Accessible Transport Program,* accessed 28th October 2026 https://www.transport.nsw.gov.au/projects/current-projects/safe-accessible-transport-program

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disabilities. Data from the Point-to-Point Commission before the package was introduced showed that the number of WATs in NSW was decreasing rapidly, dropping 20% in the 2023/24 financial year, with 70% of WAT trips booked through the official platform not completed (Wheelchair Book & Ride Data, 2024). Since the introduction of the WAT emergency package implemented in 2025, WAT licenses have mostly stabilised, falling only 3% in the period between March 2025-March 2026[12].

Refusals using the Taxi Transport Subsidy Scheme

Alongside improvements to issues with WATs, there has been an improvement in addressing issues preventing people with disabilities in NSW utilising the TTSS. Research conducted by PDCN in 2023 found that a common concern for passengers that were surveyed was the refusal to take the TTSS Smartcard by drivers. It was often the case that drivers would give a range of what appeared to be disingenuous reasons to not take the card or asked for higher fares if passengers wanted to use the cards.

"In my opinion, there are a lot of drivers who don't know how [the TTSS card] works, or who are playing the system. I often get quoted a higher price for my fares once they know I have an M 40. They will even ask me if they can put a little extra on the M 40, but it won't be passed along to me […] plenty of drivers either pretend or don't know how to use the card that was introduced. […] And I receive very poor responses from the actual taxi companies, because what incentive do they have to not take more money from me as a customer." (Taxi Troubles, PDCN 2023)[13].

It was also a common experience for users of the interstate voucher under the TTSS to be met with poor customer service, service refusals, and discrimination. This has left people wanting to use the dockets stranded and often verbally abused by drivers who do not want to deal with the system.

"I was in Queensland […] and the driver said, "not those bloody things." I was in Melbourne […] and had a driver yell at me that I was "the worst passenger ever and you've ruined my day" for handing him my [interstate TTSS] voucher. I was in Melbourne […] and when we got near my destination and I was filling out my voucher, the driver drove 300 metres past where I asked him to stop and said to me "you're not disabled, you can walk."" (Taxi Troubles, PDCN 2023)[14].

[12] Point to Point Commission (2026), *industry statistics,* accessed 28th October 2026 https://www.pointtopoint.nsw.gov.au/about-commissioner/industry-statistics
[13] Physical Disability Council of NSW (2023), *Taxi Troubles*, https://www.pdcnsw.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2023/04/Taxi-Data-Report-March-2023-final.pdf
[14] ibid

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A longstanding loophole in the TTSS system meant that taxi drivers who refused to accept payment under the TTSS faced no penalty. Following sustained advocacy by Disability Advocates, in March 2026, it was announced by the NSW government that drivers in NSW will now be fined $3000 for refusing to accept TTSS paper dockets, smartcards and interstate subsidy schemes. In addition to this, the fine for drivers who start the meter early has also been increased from $300 to $3000. This has increased safeguards for people with disabilities who utilise the TTSS, with the government providing impactful penalties for poor behaviour. There is now reassurance that when a person with disabilities is unjustifiably refused service because of their TTSS use, there will be meaningful action taken against the driver.

While these reforms to the TTSS and the emergency WAT package have seen improvements to transport for people with physical disabilities, there is yet to be any confirmation of long-term reforms. The $15million emergency package to support WATs in NSW was set to be a 12-month program and was extended to continue into another 12 months in the 2026/2027 NSW budget. There is need for transparency of long-term reforms and a commitment from government to ensure that once this funding ends, WATs continue to be supported so that people with physical disabilities can access their communities and independence.

Recommendation 4: Greater transparency from the NSW Government on long-term Wheelchair Accessible Taxi reforms and genuine collaboration with disability advocacy and representative organisations in shaping the new legislation to improve the supply of wheelchair taxis in NSW.

Recommendation 5: The Australian government to help facilitate the design and implementation of a solution to cross-border Taxi Transport Subsidy Scheme issues in collaboration with the taxi industry and people with disabilities.

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5. Personal and Community Supports

Summary

People with physical disabilities in NSW continue to face significant barriers accessing the personal and community supports necessary to participate in everyday life. While the NDIS has improved choice and control for those who are eligible and able to access the scheme, particularly for those with higher support needs, substantial gaps remain in the availability, adequacy and consistency of disability supports. These challenges are particularly pronounced for people who are not eligible for the NDIS and for those living in regional, rural and remote communities where service availability remains limited.

PDCN is particularly concerned about the current lack of clarity regarding foundational supports for people with physical disabilities in NSW outside the NDIS. Community consultation with PDCN members has consistently demonstrated that many people with physical disabilities are either unaware of available supports or do not believe appropriate services exist. Without adequately funded and accessible foundational supports, people risk falling into a gap between the NDIS and mainstream services, leaving essential support needs unmet.

PDCN also remains concerned about growing pressures on informal carers and the impact of inconsistent access to assistive technology and disability supports. Delays in obtaining equipment, reductions in support funding, provider shortages and inconsistent decision-making can reduce independence, increase social isolation and place additional pressure on families and carers and public systems. Meaningful reform must focus on ensuring that all people with physical disabilities, regardless of NDIS eligibility or location, can access timely, appropriate and reliable supports.

Feedback from the NSW physical disability community

Foundational supports and service gaps

PDCN's consultations and surveys consistently demonstrate that many people with physical disabilities struggle to access appropriate supports outside the NDIS. In an April 2025 PDCN survey, 56.6% of respondents were either unaware of available supports outside the NDIS or believed adequate supports did not exist. Additionally, 96.6% reported that additional disability supports would positively affect their lives.

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These findings align with broader national trends. The Productivity Commission Report on Government Services 2026 found that 39.4% of people with disability reported not receiving the formal assistance they require, increasing from 34.1% in 2012[15]. This demonstrates a growing gap between support needs and support availability.

PDCN's community consultation in Broken Hill identified significant concerns regarding limited-service availability, lengthy waiting periods and difficulties accessing both community-based services and NDIS supports. These challenges were particularly evident in regional communities, where workforce shortages and limited provider availability further restrict access to support for people with physical disabilities.

Consistency and accessibility of NDIS supports

While the NDIS has improved choice and control for many people with physical disabilities, access to practical supports remains inconsistent. The Productivity Commissioner Report found that 55% of NDIS participants aged 15 years and over reported having adequate choice of providers in 2025, up from 48% in 2019[16]. However, only 43% of families and carers reported having adequate control when selecting services.

Although administrative performance has improved, these gains have not always translated into better access to supports. PDCN's submission on the NDIS Support Rules found that 43.5% of respondents considered the support lists confusing, difficult to understand or unhelpful, while 29.2% reported inconsistent application of the rules.

PDCN's regional consultations also identified concerns regarding provider conduct, unresolved complaints, workforce shortages and reductions in individual support packages. Participants reported that inconsistent funding decisions had reduced access to therapies, personal care and other essential supports.

Increasing pressure on carers

Informal carers continue to play a critical role in supporting people with physical disabilities. However, evidence indicates that these arrangements are becoming increasingly

[15] Steering Committee for the Review of Government Service Provision, *'Report on Government Services 2026 Community services (part F)'*.
[16] Steering Committee for the Review of Government Service Provision, *'Report on Government Services 2026: Community services (part F)'*.

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unsustainable. The Productivity Commission Report found that 35% of primary carers reported needing additional assistance in 2022, compared with 25% in 2018. In addition, 68.1% of carers reported low personal wellbeing in 2024-25, while 59.9% reported fair or poor health outcomes[17].

PDCN's community consultations revealed consistent themes across different part of regional and rural NSW that families, carers, providers and community organisations are increasingly filling gaps left by formal service systems. Both people with physical disabilities and providers reported that providers were regularly undertaking unpaid advocacy and transport assistance to ensure people could access essential services. Without adequate formal supports and respite options, both carers and people with disability face greater risks of social, financial and health-related pressures.

Access to assistive technology

Timely access to assistive technology is critical to the independence, safety and community participation of people with physical disabilities. However, PDCN continues to receive reports of delays securing access to equipment, funding reductions for assistive technology and refusals for essential equipment.

In our submission on the NDIS Rules, PDCN documented the experience of a person with cerebral palsy whose therapy funding was substantially reduced and whose request for orthotics was rejected despite evidence of a significant falls risk[18]. Similarly, consultations in Orange highlighted the essential role of mobility equipment in managing risks and supporting independent living.

The Productivity Commission Report also found that the proportion of NDIS participants receiving assistive technology supports declined from 30% in 2021-22 to 22% in 2025-26.[19] Delays or barriers to accessing assistive technology can increase fall risks, reduce independence and create greater reliance on both formal and informal supports.

[17] Steering Committee for the Review of Government Service Provision, *'Report on Government Services 2026: Community services (part F)'*.
[18] Physical Disability of NSW Submission in Response to the Inquiry on NDIS Support Rules, August 2025.
[19] Steering Committee for the Review of Government Service Provision, *'Report on Government Services 2026: Community services (part F)'*.

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Recommendation 4: For both the Australian Government and NSW Government to ensure that Foundational Supports in NSW are informed by and meet the needs of people with physical disabilities who are not eligible for the NDIS.

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6. Health

Summary

PDCN has consistently heard from people with physical disabilities in NSW about poor healthcare experiences caused by accessibility and inclusion barriers[20]. In response, PDCN successfully advocated to the NSW Minister for Health in 2025 for the development of the first NSW Disability Health Strategy and has since worked closely with senior NSW Health officials to co-design its development and engagement process. PDCN CEO Ed Morris serves as Co-Chair of the Steering Committee alongside the NSW Health Deputy Secretary, with a co-designed engagement plan agreed in September 2026. Community engagement with people with disability will commence in late 2026, followed by broader consultation in 2027.

While the NSW Disability Health Strategy is currently under development, people with physical disabilities in NSW still face significant barriers to equitable healthcare. These include limited access to specialists, inaccessible facilities, and gaps in disability awareness across the health system, particularly for those with severe disabilities and those living in regional, rural and remote areas. These barriers can delay treatment, reduce access to preventative care and contribute to poorer health outcomes. PDCN also highlights the need for stronger disability-inclusive emergency preparedness and disaster response measures. Achieving better health and wellbeing outcomes will require coordinated action across healthcare, mental health and emergency management systems to ensure people with physical disabilities can access services on an equal basis with the broader community.

Feedback from the NSW physical disability community

Accessible healthcare and provider capability

PDCN's consultations show that people with physical disabilities often have better healthcare experiences when health professionals understand disability and adapt their care accordingly. During PDCN's Lived Experience Advisory Panel (LEAP) in October 2025, members spoke positively about providers who listened to them, understood the impact of their disability and considered their access requirements throughout treatment.

However, this experience is not consistent across NSW. Consultations conducted in Southern NSW in June 2025 identified ongoing concerns about limited access to medical specialists, accessibility issues in healthcare facilities and a lack of consultation with people

[20] https://www.pdcnsw.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/Care-Experiences-Report-2022-spread-FINAL.pdf

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with disability on new health infrastructure projects. These concerns were particularly common in regional communities, where service availability is often limited.

The consequences of these barriers can be significant. The Australian Disability Strategy 2021-2031 found that people with disability experienced potentially avoidable deaths in hospital at more than seven times the rate of people without disability in 2021-22, at 238 per 100,000 people compared with 33 per 100,000[21].

Despite these concerns, there are examples of positive outcomes. ABS data found that 89% of people with disability receiving community allied health services in 2024 were satisfied with the quality of care they received. This demonstrates the important role these services play in supporting people with disability to maintain their health and wellbeing.

While waiting times for NDIS participants leaving hospital have improved, PDCN continues to hear concerns about inaccessible facilities, workforce capability gaps and shortages of specialist services. These barriers continue to affect healthcare outcomes for people with physical disabilities across NSW.

Preventative healthcare and early intervention

Access to preventative healthcare remains a significant challenge for many people with disability. The ABS found that in 2024 only 66% of people with disability could access preventative healthcare without difficulty, compared with 82% of people without disability[22]. Access was even more difficult for people with severe or profound disability, with almost half reporting barriers to preventative and early intervention healthcare. These barriers can result in delayed diagnoses, untreated health conditions and avoidable hospital admissions. While some improvements have been made in healthcare accessibility, people with disability continue to face greater difficulty accessing the services needed to maintain their health before issues become more serious.

PDCN believes there is a need for greater investment in accessible community-based healthcare, home-based health services and specialist outreach programs, particularly in regional and rural communities where access to healthcare remains limited.

[21] Australia's Disability Strategy 2021–2031 Outcomes Framework *'4th annual report, Policy Priority: Health and wellbeing - Australian Institute of Health and Welfare'*

22 Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, '*Access to preventive health care - Health and wellbeing*'.

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Emergency preparedness and response

Emergency planning and disaster response must take account of the needs of people with physical disabilities. This includes accessible information, evacuation assistance, continuity of essential supports and access to assistive technology and mobility equipment during emergencies.

The Australian Disability Strategy found that 86% of people with disability were satisfied with the accessibility of emergency preparedness and response information and services in 2024.[23] While this is a positive result, PDCN believes there is still a need to ensure disability inclusion is embedded across emergency planning and response systems.

Our consultations have highlighted concerns about disruptions to essential supports during emergencies and whether people with physical disabilities would be able to safely evacuate or maintain access to necessary care and equipment. Inadequate planning can place people at increased risk of injury, isolation and interrupted support. People with physical disabilities should not be expected to rely solely on family members or informal supports to remain safe during disasters and emergencies.

Recommendations:

Recommendation 5: The NSW Government should continue to ensure the development and implementation of the NSW Disability Health Strategy is co-designed with people with disabilities, disability representative organisations, peak bodies, healthcare providers and other key stakeholders. The Strategy should reflect the opportunities, priorities and challenges identified through this engagement process and include measurable actions, accountability mechanisms and ongoing community involvement in implementation and evaluation.

Recommendation 6: The Australian Government should work with state and territory governments to promote the development and implementation of disability-inclusive health strategies across all jurisdictions. These strategies should adopt best-practice co-design principles, embed the voices of people with disability throughout policy development and implementation, and address barriers to accessible, equitable and high-quality healthcare for people with disability.

[23] ibid

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Recommendation 7: The NSW and Australian Governments should strengthen disability-inclusive emergency planning and risk management across health services and emergency management frameworks, including requirements for accessible communication, evacuation assistance, continuity of essential supports and access to assistive technology during emergencies.

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