

**INQUIRY INTO FOUNDATIONAL AND DISABILITY  
SUPPORTS AVAILABLE FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG  
PEOPLE IN NEW SOUTH WALES**

**Organisation:** Disability Council NSW

**Date Received:** 28 March 2025

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Our ref: D25/133369

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**RE: Inquiry into Foundational and Disability Supports Available for Children and Young People in NSW**

Delivered by email to [DisabilitySupports@parliament.nsw.gov.au](mailto:DisabilitySupports@parliament.nsw.gov.au)

Dear Committee Chair

Thank you for the opportunity provide input into the inquiry into foundational and disability supports available for children and young people in NSW.

The Disability Council NSW (the 'Council') is a statutory body that provides independent advice to the Minister for Disability Inclusion on matters that affect people with disability in NSW, as well as their families and carers.

In relation to this inquiry, the Council would like to make the following comments.

**1. Early childhood intervention services**

Providing early childhood intervention services and other foundational supports is paramount in fostering the holistic development of children with developmental concerns, delays, differences, or disabilities. These services significantly improve health outcomes, enhance educational achievements, and promote social inclusion.

In NSW, a diverse range of services is available, including medical, community-nursing, allied health services, and National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) services. However, there is a pressing need to enhance the effectiveness, availability, and accessibility of these services, particularly in regional, rural, and remote areas.

**Actions to consider:**

- Allocate additional funding to expand service availability and reduce waiting times, particularly in underserved areas
- Implement and expand telehealth services to provide remote access to medical and allied health professionals

- Establish mobile clinics to deliver services directly to regional, rural, and remote communities

## 2. Diagnostic services

Effective diagnostic services are crucial for early identification and intervention. Current gaps and barriers, such as long waiting times and limited specialist access, hinder timely diagnosis and support.

While the Council acknowledges the Carer Gateway, a Council member shared their experience over the last 18 months seeking assistance for their son. They were shuffled between a GP, psychologist, and teachers, taking 12 months from diagnosis to get a treatment appointment, even with a full-cost service. The public system had even longer waiting times.

They had to search through Google and make phone calls to find a paediatric psychiatrist for ADHD medication. A centralised point showing available services and appointment capacities would be helpful. They eventually used a telehealth service from another state, but it still took 12 months to get an appointment.

Meanwhile, their son faced significant issues, and teachers criticised the member for not "getting him treated," despite their efforts and understanding of the service system.

### Actions to consider:

- Invest in training and recruitment to increase the number of specialists available for diagnostic services
- Integrate diagnostic services within community health centres to provide accessible, local diagnostic options
- Simplify and expedite referral processes to reduce delays in diagnosis and intervention

## 3. Barriers to accessing services

Barriers to accessing early childhood intervention services profoundly impact children and their families. These barriers include socioeconomic factors, geographic isolation, and limited awareness of available services.

### Actions to consider:

- Implement policy changes to ensure equitable access to services regardless of socioeconomic status or location
- Provide additional support, such as transportation assistance and financial subsidies, to families in need
- Launch awareness campaigns to inform families about available services and how to access them. Consideration should be given to establishing a centralised database of services and appointment pathways, with a national scope to capture telehealth services.

#### 4. Collaboration across sectors

Collaboration across government and non-government sectors is essential for delivering comprehensive support to children and young people. Engaging with Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations, early learning services, educational settings, and health services can foster a more integrated and responsive support system.

##### Actions to consider:

- Establish formal partnerships between government agencies, non-government organisations, and community groups
- Create integrated service hubs that co-locate multiple services to provide a one-stop shop for families
- Hold regular meetings with stakeholders to ensure ongoing collaboration and address emerging issues

#### 5. Best practice models

Examining best practice models from other jurisdictions can provide valuable insights for NSW. Programs that demonstrate successful outcomes in child development and early childhood intervention should be adapted and implemented within the state, ensuring they are culturally and contextually appropriate.

##### Actions to consider:

- Conduct benchmarking studies to identify and evaluate best practice models from other regions
- Implement pilot programs based on successful models and assess their effectiveness in NSW

- Ensure that programs are adapted to meet NSW communities' cultural and contextual needs

## 6. Workforce challenges

The child development and early childhood intervention sectors face significant workforce challenges, including high demand, workforce shortages, and varying levels of worker expertise.

### Actions to consider:

- Invest in workforce development initiatives, including training programs and professional development opportunities
- Provide incentives, such as relocation assistance and higher pay, to attract professionals to work in regional, rural, and remote areas
- Enhance working conditions to retain skilled professionals, including offering flexible work arrangements and support for continuing education

## 7. Implementation of recommendations

The NDIS Review Final Report recommendations, and the Disability Royal Commission Final Report should be implemented to strengthen foundational supports.

### Actions to consider:

- Enhance coordination between service providers to ensure seamless support for children and families
- Allocate additional funding to implement the recommendations effectively
- Ensure that all services are person-centred and family-focused, prioritising the needs and preferences of children and their families

## 8. Enhancing disability responsiveness

The Australian Council of Learned Academies delivered a report titled “[\*Ensuring Occupations are Responsive to People with Disability\*](#)” (Australian Council of Learned Academies, 2022). This report outlines a strategy comprising objectives, principles, and an Education and Training Assessment Tool that, if adopted, will make all occupations more attuned to the needs of people with disability.

**Actions to consider:**

- Implement the report's Good Practice Guide and Action Plan (Part D, page 54-73) to improve the disability responsiveness of all professions

The Council emphasises the critical need for early childhood intervention services, effective diagnostic services, and the removal of barriers to accessing these supports. Collaboration across sectors, the adoption of best practice models, and addressing workforce challenges are essential to creating a comprehensive and responsive support system. Implementing the recommendations from the NDIS Review and the Disability Royal Commission, along with enhancing disability responsiveness across all professions, will significantly improve outcomes for children and young people with disability. The Council looks forward to seeing these suggestions incorporated into the final recommendations and is committed to supporting their implementation for the benefit of all children and young people in NSW.

Thank you once again for the opportunity to provide input to the inquiry.

Yours faithfully

Jane Spring AM  
Chair

Jill Duncan  
Deputy Chair

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## Works Cited

Australian Council of Learned Academies. (2022). *Enhancing Disability Responsiveness of Professionals*. Retrieved from Australian Council of Learned Academies:  
<https://acola.org/disability-responsiveness/>