

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

**Organisation:** Illawarra Disability Alliance

**Date Received:** 30 April 2025

---



# SUBMISSION

Illawarra Disability Alliance Submission  
to the NSW Government Inquiry into  
Foundational Supports for Children  
and Young People with Disability

**APRIL 2025**



# ILLAWARRA DISABILITY ALLIANCE

## current members



# **Illawarra Disability Alliance - Submission to the NSW Government Inquiry into Foundational Supports for Children and Young People with Disability**

## **About Illawarra Disability Alliance**

Illawarra Disability Alliance (IDA) is made up of registered not-for-profit disability providers working together to deliver better outcomes for people with a disability in our community.

IDA aims are to:

- work collaboratively with people with disability, their carers, and across agencies and government to advocate for the rights of people with disability and promote inclusion.
- contribute to a strong functioning disability support network which proactively advocates for better outcomes for people with disability.
- represent the local region and support market stewardship by contributing to State and National policy discussions.
- ensure that as service providers we are well informed and supported.
- liaise with all levels of government on region specific issues (e.g., health, education, housing, NDIS, etc) in order to provide sound, timely advice that contributes to quality policy decisions.

## **Introduction**

The Illawarra Disability Alliance (IDA) welcomes the opportunity to contribute to the NSW Parliament's Select Committee Inquiry into Foundational and Disability Supports Available for Children and Young People in NSW.

This submission represents input from member organizations of the IDA in response to the committee terms of reference to ensure foundational supports are inclusive, sustainable, and effective in supporting the rights and wellbeing of children and young people with disability across New South Wales.

As a group of registered, not for profit, reputable and high performing organisations, IDA members have significant experience in providing a range of supports, including many that would be considered "foundational" under the new model, to children and young people with disability, their families and the service systems which support them. With a history of delivering good outcomes through individual and block funded programs IDA members are mission based, connected to community and understand the

## Illawarra Disability Alliance - Submission to the NSW Government Inquiry into Foundational Supports for Children and Young People with Disability

gaps. They are experienced in responding to address needs through responsive service delivery underpinned by good governance and high quality standards.

IDA members hold that foundational supports should be universally accessible, inclusive, and embedded in mainstream settings. They are essential for ensuring all children and young people with disability can thrive, regardless of NDIS eligibility.

The NSW approach to foundational supports must be grounded in principles of early intervention, inclusion and family-centred practice and in alignment with Australia's Disability Strategy with its purpose to “- *drive mainstream services and systems to improve outcomes for people with disability*” (p.9, 2024)<sup>1</sup> and national commitments as signatory to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD),

- *“States Parties shall take all necessary measures to ensure the full enjoyment by children with disabilities of all human rights and fundamental freedoms on an equal basis with other children.”<sup>2</sup>*

### **Align NSW Foundational Supports with other States and Territories**

IDA members wished to express strong support for and emphasize these statements from the NDIS Review Final Report<sup>3</sup>:

- “Investment in foundational supports should be guided by a Foundational Support Strategy, ideally jointly designed, funded and commissioned by all governments. It should ensure good planning, coordination and accountability, with suitable governance to track and measure outcomes.” (p.59).
- *“Changes to access and budget setting processes for children and young people should only be implemented once widespread foundational supports are in place.”* (p.41).

In other words, **it is critical that NSW aligns itself with other states and territories and the federal government's Australia wide strategy** in the design of a NSW based strategy to foundational supports. Also that NSW children with disability and their families should not face any changes to

---

<sup>1</sup> © Commonwealth of Australia (Department of Social Services) 2024

<sup>2</sup> [Article 7 – Children with disabilities | United Nations Enable](#)

<sup>3</sup> [Working together to deliver the NDIS. NDIS Review: Final Report](#)

## Illawarra Disability Alliance - Submission to the NSW Government Inquiry into Foundational Supports for Children and Young People with Disability

accessibility with regard the NDIS until such time as foundational supports are in place.

Closely related, the IDA notes that despite the Productivity Commissions review of the National Disability Agreement and subsequent report released in 2019 which recommended a new National Disability Agreement “...to promote cooperation, enhance accountability for outcomes and clarify roles and responsibilities of governments.” (p.26, 2019)<sup>4</sup> this has not been achieved at this stage and this focus on a National Foundational Supports Strategy may represent an opportunity to reinvigorate this process. Regardless it is important that all states and territories and their associated departments around the country are in alignment with regards to the provision of general and targeted foundational supports.

### Experience of CYP and Families

The IDA recognizes the importance and expertise that comes with lived experience and does not intend to speak for people with disability or their families in this response. Per [the NSW briefing paper](#) IDA recognizes that “...many factors and related supports and services contribute to the wellbeing and healthy development of children. Understanding wellbeing requires a holistic perspective. Also, socioeconomic and cultural factors may result in different experiences and outcomes between various children with disability and their families.” (p.4).

Foundational supports are intended to level the playing field to build inclusive practice into all levels of support to children with disability and their families across NSW to enable all children to experience wellbeing and healthy development, inclusion and participation with the lightest possible touch required to achieve this outcome.

The IDA members felt that the articulation of General, Targeted and NDIS supports (see Figure 1 below from the NDIS Review Final Report, p.35)<sup>5</sup> was helpful but that it should be agreed that children with disability in NSW and across the country may access any or all parts of the disability support system, including foundational supports as required. Whether or not they access NDIS funded supports, children with disability must be able to access General or Targeted Foundational supports as needed when accessing mainstream service systems e.g. through education.

---

<sup>4</sup> [Overview - Study report - Review of the National Disability Agreement](#)

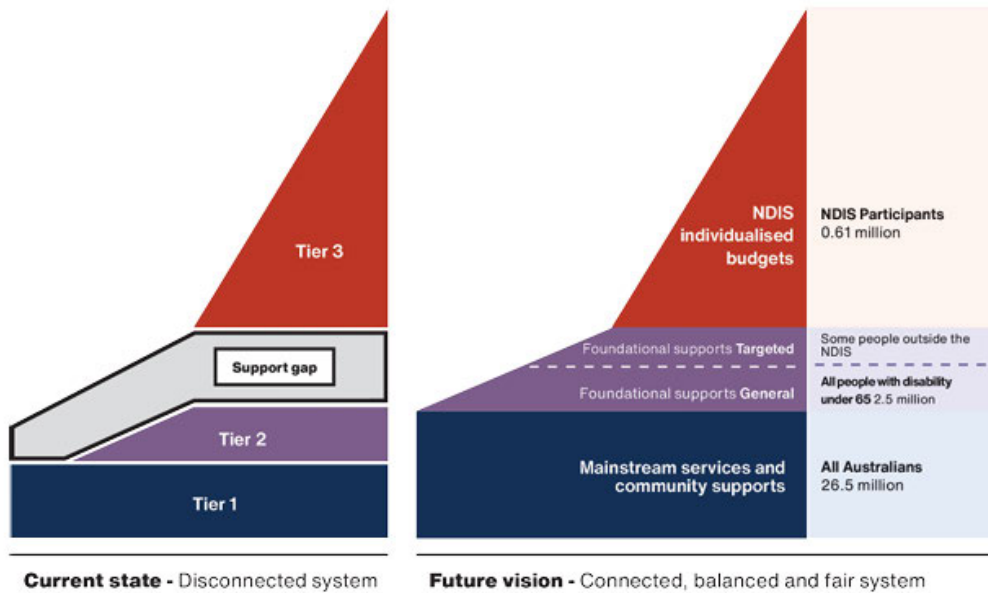
<sup>5</sup> [Working together to deliver the NDIS. NDIS Review: Final Report](#)



# Illawarra Disability Alliance - Submission to the NSW Government Inquiry into Foundational Supports for Children and Young People with Disability

Figure 1

Vision for an integrated, graduated model of supports for all people with disability



IDA members also felt it important to articulate what Foundational Supports **should not include**. That is, Foundational Supports should not:

- Replace individualised supports available through the NDIS for children with high and complex needs.
- Be designed or delivered in a segregated or exclusionary way (e.g., special programs with no pathways to inclusion).
- Be short-term or one-off initiatives with no continuity or sustainable outcomes.
- Create barriers to access based on diagnosis or funding status.

## What Foundational Supports Should be Funded?

IDA members discussed that Foundational Supports should include:

### 1. Inclusive Early Childhood Education and Care

- Access to inclusive preschools, supported playgroups, and developmentally appropriate early intervention.
- Workforce training for early childhood educators in disability-inclusive practice.
- Collaboration between early childhood educators and allied health professionals.

# **Illawarra Disability Alliance - Submission to the NSW Government Inquiry into Foundational Supports for Children and Young People with Disability**

## **2. Inclusive Education Access and Supports**

- Equal access to mainstream education and support including legal rights to access local mainstream schools.
- Prevention of the use of exclusionary discipline against students with disability (reporting and monitoring through data collection).
- Specialist teaching support and trained education aides available in all schools.
- Focused supports to children with Developmental Delay reaching school age (5 to 7 yo) without a diagnosis.
- Use of assistive technologies to enhance participation and learning.
- Capacity-building programs for educators in inclusive pedagogy and disability awareness.
- Support for school-based allied health interventions (speech, OT, psych).

## **3. Health and Allied Health Services**

- Enhanced access to screening and diagnostic services (Brighter Beginnings, Hearing Screenings, Community Health and Child and Family Clinics, My Health Record, Blue books – suggest this is turned into an app to support pick up on developmental issues early).
- Access to community-based allied health services such as speech pathology, occupational therapy, psychology, and physiotherapy.
- Integration of these supports into schools and local service hubs to improve accessibility.

## **4. Community Participation Supports**

- Inclusive access to sport, arts, and recreation programs, including funding for reasonable adjustments.
- Local peer support and social groups tailored to young people with disability.

## **5. Family and Carer Supports**

- Programs that support families to navigate systems, build skills, and advocate for their children.
- Family peer support and funding for community capacity building with toy libraries, play groups and child and family development services.
- Funded accessible family respite care options.
- Access to peer support networks and culturally appropriate services.



# **Illawarra Disability Alliance - Submission to the NSW Government Inquiry into Foundational Supports for Children and Young People with Disability**

## **6. Transition Supports**

- Services to support transitions at key life stages, particularly into school (e.g. focused supports to assist children with Developmental Delay reaching school age), adolescence, and adulthood.
- Individualised planning and navigation supports during these transitions.

## **Funding for Foundational Supports**

A sustainable and transparent funding model is essential to ensure children and young people with disability in NSW can access foundational supports.

### **1. Shared Responsibility Between Governments**

- State-funded foundational supports should be complemented, not replaced, by individualised NDIS plans with no concerns about “double dipping”.

### **2. Block and Program-Based Funding**

- Secure and long-term block funding for community-based programs, early intervention services, and inclusion initiatives.
- Block funding can often be more flexibly delivered and lends itself to capacity building due to the throughput focus.
- Move away from fragmented and time-limited grants.

### **3. School Resourcing**

- Access audits of all schools to be conducted by principals to identify access requirements and funding eligibility.
- Allocate funding to schools based on the functional needs of students rather than diagnostic categories.
- Ensure every school has access to specialist support staff and resources with allocations based on functional needs of students.

### **4. Investment in Evidence-Based Supports**

- Prioritise funding for programs with demonstrated positive outcomes in wellbeing, learning, and participation.

## **Ensuring Quality and Accountability**

To ensure foundational supports deliver quality outcomes, IDA members advise the following mechanisms are essential:

### **1. Co-Design and Consultation**

- Ongoing consultation and co-design with children and young people with disability, families, and carers.

## **Illawarra Disability Alliance - Submission to the NSW Government Inquiry into Foundational Supports for Children and Young People with Disability**

- Mechanisms for lived experience voices to shape design, delivery, and review of supports.

### **2. Service Quality and Accreditation**

- Minimum standards for training and qualifications for professionals delivering foundational supports.
- Mandatory professional development in disability inclusion and child development.

### **3. Monitoring and Evaluation**

- Independent evaluations of funded programs to assess effectiveness and outcomes.
- Data collection that is disaggregated by disability, age, location, and cultural background to ensure equity.

### **4. Interagency Collaboration**

- Stronger coordination and collaboration opportunities and initiatives to be facilitated between education, health, disability, and community sectors.

### **5. Legal and Rights-Based Frameworks**

- A review of the Disability Inclusion Act will be required to incorporate Foundational Supports and provide a legal framework for them in NSW.
- All supports must be underpinned by the rights of the child and principles of inclusion, consistent with the UNCRPD.

## **Conclusion**

The IDA supports the move to design and fund Foundational Supports for children and young people with disability in NSW as a priority to support positive outcomes for all people with disability and the sustainability and original intent of the NDIS with regard to “Tier 2” supports.

Foundational supports are in many cases a gap in the system that should not be funded via the NDIS and are a necessity for ensuring equity and inclusion for children and young people with disability.

The Illawarra Disability Alliance commends the NSW Government for taking this step to strengthen foundational supports and hope that these recommendations will prove useful in the development of a sustainable and inclusive model.

**Illawarra Disability Alliance - Submission to the NSW Government Inquiry  
into Foundational Supports for Children and Young People with Disability**

For further information in relation to this submission please contact:

**Nicky Sloan**

Chief Executive Officer  
Community Industry Group (IDA secretariat)  
PO Box 156, Port Kembla NSW 2505  
T: (02) 4256 4333