



Federal Budget 2025-2026 - Submission to Treasury

The vision of the Australian Disability and Development Consortium (ADDC) is that the voices and rights of people with disabilities are elevated, reflected in, and inform all international development policies and programs of Australian agencies. In pursuit of this vision, we welcome the opportunity to provide input drawn from the experience and expertise of our membership for the 2025-26 Federal Budget.

Australia's new *International Disability Equity and Rights Strategy* (IDEARS) provides an unprecedented opportunity to advance disability equity and rights across Australia's humanitarian and international development programs. Years of investment into the global disability movement, partnerships in our Indo-Pacific region, deep consultation with people with disabilities, and recent investments in disability-specific services, such as assistive technology, in the Indo-Pacific give Australia credibility as a trusted partner and global champion of disability equity and rights. ADDC and its members have welcomed IDEARS. Turning to implementation and achieving the ambitious principles and performance target set out in IDEARS, these will not be achieved with a business-as-usual approach. The first budget of the IDEARS era will be crucial to setting it up for success.

This submission provides budgetary analysis and guidance to achieve the impressive ambition of IDEARS and improve Australia's performance on disability equity across all areas of Australia's International Development Policy and accompanying strategies.

To meet Australia's commitments, ADDC recommends the following:

Recommendations:

1. Commit \$20m per year for disability equity partnerships as the cornerstone of Australia's International Disability Equity and Rights Strategy over the life of the strategy. This should be complemented by continued growth in investment in disability-specific initiatives to advance the preconditions to inclusion.
2. Increase DFAT's capability to strengthen performance on disability equity in Australian development assistance to meet the ambitious performance target set in IDEARS, by:
 - a. Ensuring a clear and significant contribution to disability equity technical expertise both via sufficient core departmental budget for staff and associated support costs to enable the effective implementation, monitoring and advocacy supporting disability equity in Canberra and at Post; and within the GEDSI help desk allocation.

- b. Establishing a requirement that all new investments over \$3m will have a disability equity objective, in line with existing requirements for climate change and gender equality.
 - c. Allocating funding to ensure OPD engagement is enabled within DFAT program and policy development, delivery, monitoring and evaluation, including through Regional and Development Partnership Plans and for policies such as IDEARS, embedding the learnings from the comprehensive and inclusive process utilised to inform IDEARS.
3. Establish a budgetary pathway for Government to increase Official Development Assistance to 1% of the Federal Budget in the first budget following the upcoming election.

Sustained funding for Australia's partnerships over the life of IDEARS

Priority One of IDEARS is to invest in partnerships and movements. Australia has committed to be a champion of the international disability rights movement, a supporter of the leadership and participation of people with disabilities at all levels, and a deeply-engaged long-term partner guided by the priorities of organisations of people with disabilities (OPDs). In order to reach the performance target of 70 per cent effective performance on disability equity by 2030 under IDEARS, twenty million dollars per year should be allocated to disability equity partnerships across the life of the strategy and its evaluation period, out to 2032, with adjustments for inflation. This funding should support the growth, expansion, and strengthening of the disability movement at the global, regional and national levels.

Priority partnerships deserve long-term funding

In a time of severe uncertainty over global development funding, Australia has a clear opportunity to demonstrate why it deserves its reputation as a development partner of choice within the Pacific Family, while simultaneously laying a firm foundation for achieving the performance targets of IDEARS. Investing in partnerships for disability equity should start with establishing long-term funding certainty for Australia's existing OPD and disability partners until 2032. This long-term, stable funding would provide assurance for Australia's key partners, freeing them to focus on their own work and advocacy and resourcing them to further collaborate with people with disabilities and advise on the design of accessible services and programs. Australia's twenty million dollar partnership fund should also invest in the disability movement more broadly, establishing new partnerships and relationships with diverse organisations across the disability movement at the global, regional, national, and local levels.

Addressing funding uncertainty

Several of Australia's key partnerships are due to expire in 2024 and 2025. This funding uncertainty should be addressed as a matter of urgency in the Budget. Australia should take

immediate action to extend or renew key partnerships, or to work with partners to ensure continuity of partnership funding in the short and medium term, as well as long term certainty. These partnerships include flagship initiatives such as disability inclusion support for the Pacific (Pacific Disability Forum: \$6.23 million, 2022 to 2025), expanding movements to advance rights and inclusion of all persons with disabilities (Disability Rights Advocacy Fund: \$9.45 million, 2020 to 2024), and support for the United Nations Partnership on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNPRPD) (\$4.2 million, 2023 to 2025). Alongside these flagships, Australia should take this opportunity to undertake a review of high-value initiatives such as *Transforming Communities for Inclusion* and identify opportunities to provide funding certainty.

Global disability rights

Local, national and regional movements for disability equity are strengthened and empowered by a thriving global disability rights movement. Foremost among these rights instruments is the *Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities*. However the IDEARS guiding principles of *Nothing Without Us* and *Disability Rights are Human Rights* dictate that Australia should support its partners and the global disability movement to participate in broader international dialogues and human rights processes, including those under the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women, as well as global climate, environment, humanitarian assistance, and disaster risk processes. Australia's partnership with the global disability movement to advocate for disability equity and rights is indispensable for the achievement of disability equity and rights in our region. It is also crucial for Australia to support our own domestic OPDs to participate in global fora, and to support the Australian disability movement to make connections and advocate alongside their global peers. This should integrate with IDEARS initiative 3 for a properly funded annual International Disability Rights Dialogue.

Driving disability-specific initiatives

Australia's twenty million dollar partnership-specific funding should be complemented by other funding for disability-specific initiatives across the development and humanitarian program, such as the continued growth in investments to advance the preconditions to inclusion. ADDC welcomed the 2024 announcements of funding for ATscale in the Indo-Pacific, as well as the \$12m catalytic investment into assistive technology in the Pacific. These disability-specific initiatives are a very practical example of what can occur under Australia's commitment to the preconditions for inclusion under IDEARS initiative 4.

Recommendation 1:

Commit \$20m per year for disability equity partnerships as the cornerstone of Australia's International Disability Equity and Rights Strategy over the life of the strategy. This should be complemented by continued growth in investment in disability-specific initiatives to advance the preconditions to inclusion.

Supporting DFAT's capacity to deliver on performance targets in IDEARS.

Ambitious targets require new approaches

ADDC welcomed the performance targets under IDEARS of 60% of programs effectively addressing disability equity by 2026, and 70% by 2030 for their ambition. Achieving them will require a strengthening of DFAT's capacity to deliver on disability equity, a renewed commitment to partner with national and regional OPDs, and new approaches to disability equity.

Ensuring disability equity technical expertise

To achieve the performance targets under IDEARS, Australia must invest in disability equity technical expertise and ensure widespread access to disability experts, both within the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) centrally and at Posts and across Australia's aid and humanitarian program. Historically much of this expertise has sat within DFAT's Disability Inclusion Section and the Disability Help Desk, as well as with OPDs and people with lived experience of disability themselves. These disability-specific focal points were important sources of institutional knowledge and expertise within Australia's aid and development program. As Australia moves towards a more integrated approach to Gender Equality, Disability and Social Inclusion (GEDSI) it is vital to ensure that disability expertise within DFAT and other actors is expanded and integrated, not diluted and lost. Committed resourcing is required to maintain and grow this.

DFAT's internal disability capability

Australia should ensure a clear and significant contribution to disability equity technical expertise both via sufficient core departmental budget for staff and associated support costs to enable effective implementation, monitoring and advocacy supporting disability inclusion. Australia should ensure proper staffing levels for the successful mainstreaming of disability equity approaches across the department, and ensure disability technical expertise exists both in Canberra and at Post level. Disability equity is clearly identified in DFAT performance metrics, and that responsibility and accountability for achieving disability equity sits with staff at the highest levels of the Department and Post. All DFAT staff should be familiar with the principles of disability equity, and disability-equal ways of working. DFAT should also support the contributions of staff with disabilities within its ranks.

Enhancing Australia's disability technical expertise should include improvements in evidence and data on disability in the development and humanitarian program.

GEDSI helpdesk

Australia should further ensure disability technical expertise is available through funding specialist disability functions within the forthcoming GEDSI help desk. A strong disability function in the GEDSI help desk is key to improve the share of programs effectively performing on disability, identify trends and innovations in disability across the development and humanitarian program, and to reduce the administrative burden on OPDs and enable them to focus on their core work.

Disability to be included in all programs over three million dollars

Australia should mandate that all programs over three million dollars incorporate disability equity. Australia's International Development Policy has three core areas for action: climate change, gender, and disability. The latest Performance of Australian Development Cooperation report 2022-2023 showed 78% of investments effectively addressing gender issues – a growing improvement from previous years. The percentage of programs addressing climate change has also risen sharply. The imperative for gender equity and climate goals be included in all programs over three million dollars appears to have strong links with successful mainstreaming and lifting performance. Mandating disability effectiveness also be included in all programs over three million dollars is a proven pathway to achieving the performance targets under IDEARS.

No budget without us

IDEARS includes the guiding principle “follow the movement's call for *nothing without us*”. This can only be realised with a *nothing without us* approach to budgets across the development and humanitarian program. In the past, OPD engagement and reasonable accommodations have often been unfunded afterthoughts in development and humanitarian initiatives, but Australia cannot achieve 70 per cent effectiveness on disability without funding for OPD engagement in policy development, program delivery, monitoring and evaluation, and both Development and Regional Partnership Plans. Funding for regular OPD engagement should lead to improved outcomes, greater local leadership and decision-making, a successful twin-track approach to disability equity, and can help ensure that no one is left behind and Australia does no harm.

Recommendation 2:

Increase DFAT's capability to strengthen performance on disability equity in Australian development assistance to meet the ambitious performance target set in IDEARS, by:

- a. Ensuring a clear and significant contribution to disability equity technical expertise both via sufficient core departmental budget for staff and associated support costs

to enable the effective implementation, monitoring and advocacy supporting disability inclusion in Canberra and at Post; and within the GEDSI help desk allocation.

- b. Establishing a requirement that all new investments over \$3m will have a disability equity objective, in line with existing requirements for climate change and gender equality.
- c. Allocating funding to ensure OPD engagement is enabled within DFAT program and policy development, delivery, monitoring and evaluation, including through Regional and Development Partnership Plans and for policies such as IDEARS, embedding the learnings from the comprehensive and inclusive process utilised to inform IDEARS.

Increase Australian Aid to 1% of the Federal Budget

Australia's ODA is vital to our national interests and the prosperity and security of the region. However, only 0.68% of Australia's Federal Budget is allocated to ODA¹. ADDC notes and supports the calls of the Australian development sector's Safer World For All campaign for Australia's ODA budget to be increased to 1% of the total Federal Budget over the coming years, as laid out in the pre-budget submission of the Australian Council for International Development (ACFID).

Recommendation 3

Establish a budgetary pathway for Government to increase Official Development Assistance to 1% of the Federal Budget in the first budget following the upcoming election.

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Submitted January 2025

¹ Budget paper 1, 2024