

# Position Statement



## People with Disability

Anglicare Australia believes in the dignity and potential of everybody. The diversity and contribution of people with disabilities enriches our communities, and an inclusive society is a better society for everyone. We must work together so that everyone can participate equally in our communities.

## Our Experience

The Anglicare Australia Network works with people with disabilities, their families and communities across the country. In 2017-18, Network members provided disability support services to 14,200 people across every state and territory. Another 6,300 people with disabilities are supported to find and maintain work. The Network also supports carers, providing nearly 1,000 people with carer support services and nearly 600 people with respite services.

## Key Issues

The strength of our society is reflected in how we support those who need it most. People with disability are more likely to experience violence, abuse, and hardship. They also find it harder to get a safe and affordable home, get an education, use transport, or find a good, fairly-paid job.

For example, the underemployment rate for people with disabilities has gone up in the last fifteen years even though their employment rate hasn't changed.<sup>1</sup> Cuts to the Disability Support Pension also mean that many people have been pushed onto the Newstart Allowance or Youth Allowance – payments so low they are punitive.

These problems show the need for more support. There are 4.3 million people with disability in Australia, and of those, 475,000 need specific support services.<sup>2</sup> For too long the system supporting people with disability has been under-funded, fragmented and unequal.

The National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) promised to solve these problems, and support everyone to live their fullest life. But for many people, this vision has not become a reality.

The Scheme's market-based approach has had some benefits in promoting flexibility, choice, and innovation. But it also takes a transactional approach that can make care less personal. The individualised model relies on personal advocacy, or support from carers and service providers. On top of that, the administration of the Scheme can be difficult and frustrating. This means that people who aren't able to navigate the Scheme are being left behind.

Stand-offs between State, Territory and Federal Governments about who will pay for what have led to gaps in services. Since the scheme was introduced, many people have lost access to health services, out-of-home-care, employment support and help with the justice system.

While the NDIS has offered more service options to some people, others have found that there are fewer services available. Some people with complex needs or in rural and remote areas can't spend their allocated funding because services simply aren't available. The Scheme has not been well adapted to meet the needs of First Nations people, particularly in remote areas where other resources are scarce.

The success of the NDIS in providing consistent, personalised care for people with disability depends on building the disability workforce. It is expected that the workforce will need to double by 2020.

We must also remember that creating an equal and accessible society for people with disability is about much more than the NDIS. We must build strong services outside the NDIS for carers and for those who aren't eligible for the Scheme. Alternatives must be guaranteed for people with psychosocial disability who are not eligible, or who choose not to engage with the NDIS. And we must build our places and spaces differently so that housing, public transport and communications can be used by everyone.

## Recommended Actions

Anglicare Australia calls for:

- A strong National Disability Strategy that holds governments accountable to ensuring accessibility and equity for people with a disability
- Increased income support so that people can search for work without living in poverty
- The provision of well-designed, affordable housing for people living with disability
- Commitment from governments and employers to increase opportunities for inclusion for people with disability, including through employment
- Investigation and action to prevent further violence, abuse and neglect of people with disability
- Strong market stewardship for the NDIS that ensures access to quality services for all Australians with disability
- A strategy for increasing the disability care workforce through partnership between government and the service sector.

1 Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (2017) Disability in Australia: Changes over time in inclusion and participation in employment.

2 Productivity Commission (2017) National Disability Insurance Scheme Costs. p70.