National Disability Research Partnership

Proceedings from the National Disability Research Partnership (NDRP) Evidence to Action Event: Exploring Knowledge Mobilisation

Acknowledgement of Country

"I'd like to begin by acknowledging the Traditional Owners of the lands on which we meet today. We pay our respects to Elders past and present, and to First Nations people joining us today. At the NDRP, we recognise the strength, leadership and resilience of First Nations people with disability. We know that First Nations people have always been researchers, knowledge holders, and truth-tellers. As we come together to talk about knowledge and action, we honour their traditions of sharing, learning, and community wisdom." – Mary Sayers, NDRP CEO

Introduction

About the National Disability Research Partnership

Our vision is policy and practice in Australia are transformed by disability-led research. Our purpose is to facilitate collaborative and inclusive disability research that builds evidence for policy and practice to advance the rights of people with disability.

Mobilising evidence for action

To achieve its vision and purpose, one of our key strategic objectives is to mobilise evidence for action. Mobilising evidence for action means quality research is used to inform real world changes that help people with disability. This means making sure findings from research are used to improve policy, practice and programs.

One of our initiatives is to hold 'evidence to action' events. In these events we host discussions about a certain topic related to the NDRP Research Agenda. This includes what we know from the research, what we don't know, and what further research is needed. The goal of these events is to work together and inform future research and policy directions.

This document

This document has:

- overview of key themes and feedback discussed at our second event held on May 1, 2025, to discuss the mobilising evidence for action,
- speaker insights and quotes,
- attendee numbers and feedback,
- breakout room feedback,
- resources, supports, and thanks.

About the event

This event focused on how to make sure research is used to create real change. It brought together people with disability, researchers, policy makers, and advocates to talk about knowledge mobilisation, the process of sharing and using knowledge in ways that influence decisions and actions.

The event began with a keynote by Professor Erin Wilson, who explained knowledge mobilisation isn't just about writing a report at the end of a project. It's about involving the right people — people with disability — from the very beginning and throughout the research. She shared practical examples and challenged everyone to think about who research is for, how it's used, and what difference it makes.

The session also revisited the 2009 SHUT OUT Report, a powerful consultation that helped shape Australia's first National Disability Strategy. Professor Kirsten Deane and Associate Professor Lorna Hallahan were both Deputy Chairs of the National People with Disability and Carer Council that guided the report development.

Madeleine Clarke, a disabled early career researcher and advocate, helped guide the panel. She reminded us that people with disability are often buried in research and erased from their own stories. She spoke about the fear and responsibility of working with people's lived experience.

At the event they shared the story behind the report, how it captured the voices of thousands of people with disability and pushed for systemic reform. They spoke about the need to honour people's stories, avoiding causing harm through consultations, and ensuring governments truly listen and act.

Overview of key themes

Throughout the session, speakers and attendees reflected on how to build genuine relationships between researchers, people with disability, and decision-makers. The big message? Research must be inclusive, accessible, used, and not shelved.

Key themes discussed included:

- Knowledge mobilisation must start at the beginning
    - Knowledge mobilisation is not something that happens at the end of a project, it's a mindset and process that must be embedded from the very start.
    - Strong and high quality research must be designed with action and use in mind.

Quote: ***"As soon as you start asking people questions about their lives, you start to mobilise that knowledge." – Lorna Hallahan***

- Relationships, collaboration and trust are central
    - Building and maintaining genuine, trusting relationships with people with disability, policy makers, and researchers is essential.
    - Co-design and iterative collaboration deepen relevance, accessibility and uptake.

- Stories drive change, and trauma-informed practice is essential
    - Personal stories help bring evidence to light, and create momentum for action. Personal stories must be invited in by researchers and shared with care.
    - Participants in Shut Out consultations shared painful, and deeply personal stories. The process lacked adequate supports, and there was a risk of re-traumatising contributors and listeners alike.

Quote: ***"People with disability are being buried in research and almost erased from their own narrative… The terror and the responsibility that comes with doing this kind of work is real." – Maddy Clarke***

- People with disability must be central, as experts and change agents
    - "Lived experience" is not enough, people with disability also bring analytical, research and advocacy expertise.
    - The best insights often come from those living through the issues, like people with disability

Quote: ***"Evidence alone is not enough—you need stories to make it come alive, to make people say: 'Okay, I heard that. What do I need to do?'" – Kirsten Deane***

- Research and policy must stay flexible and reflect complexity
    - Predefining research questions or policy problems too early risks distorting findings or missing more pressing issues.
    - We must resist pressure to oversimplify complex problems. Policymakers must be prepared to work with "complexity, contradiction and polyphony", or messy, complicated situations where there are many different voices and views.

- Knowledge use is an ongoing, embedded process
    - Mobilisation isn't just "one moment" when a report is released, it's a layered and ongoing process involving sense-making, iteration, and internalisation.
    - Policy makers are more likely to use research if they're engaged during its development, not just handed a report at the end.

Quote: **"Knowledge mobilisation isn't what happens at the end. It must be built in from the start." – Erin Wilson**

- "Impact" happens in unexpected ways
    - The power of knowledge mobilisation lies in uptake, people picking up research or stories and using them in ways we may never see.
    - For Shut Out, its impact extended far beyond government, advocates, families and allies "ran with it," using it to push for change.

Breakout room discussions: Exploring what it takes to mobilise evidence for action

As part of the event, attendees joined facilitated breakout rooms to explore five key themes critical to effective knowledge mobilisation. These small-group discussions were designed to generate insight, share lived and professional experience, and identify practical solutions to move research into action.

Each group was supported by a facilitator and note-taker, and prompts were provided to help spark reflection and focused dialogue. The themes for the breakout rooms were:

1. Research policy partnerships
2. Sharing research in accessible ways
3. Community-led advocacy
4. Cross-sector collaboration
5. Overcoming barriers

The insights shared in the breakout rooms (Table 1) reflect deep expertise, lived experience, and a strong collective commitment to improving how knowledge is mobilised and put into action. Attendees offered both practical ideas and honest reflections about what's working, what isn't, and where the biggest opportunities lie.

While these discussions surfaced valuable themes and potential directions, they are just the beginning. Further work is needed to translate this input into concrete next steps, actions, and partnerships that align with the NDRP's Guiding Principles and Strategic Plan.

Table 1: Breakout room feedback summarised

What was asked	What was said (summary)	Possible solutions suggested
What works well when researchers and policymakers collaborate? What gets in the way? What needs to change?	Trust, early collaboration, and understanding policy timelines matter. Barriers include short-term focus, rigid procurement, lack of access to research, and exclusion of people with disability.	Develop resources for embedding policy partnerships early in research Facilitate relationship brokering between research teams and government. Run workshops on the policy cycle
What barriers make research hard to access? How to share in different formats? Who needs it most?	Jargon and paywalls were key barriers. Accessible formats needed: plain language, infographics, audio. Importance of involving target audiences and funding accessibility upfront.	Create a guide to accessible research outputs (beyond Easy Read) Fund accessibility planning in all projects. Build a repository of accessible research examples
How can research support lived experience advocacy? What's missing? How can community-led research create change?	Over-consultation and gatekeeping block meaningful involvement. Research must be inclusive and intersectional. Data should reflect real, diverse experiences and enable systemic advocacy.	Support a peer researcher workforce. Fund training programs and fellowships for people with disability Prioritise intersectional approaches and better ethics support for community-led research
Who needs to be involved in knowledge mobilisation? How to build stronger links and supports?	Building long-term relationships takes time and resources. Silos and lack of shared language make collaboration difficult. Solutions include business-accelerator-style events and co-developed knowledge practices.	Develop cross-sector engagement tools. Facilitate long-term research alliances across sectors. Host networking and ideation events for problem-solving.
What are common barriers? What has worked to turn research into action? What new ideas could improve this?	Translation isn't funded. Research often misaligned with budget cycles or inaccessible due to language or assumptions. Need shared language and empathy.	Create a funding stream for research translation. Develop shared language glossaries. Provide coaching or microgrants for evidence-use pilots inside systems.

Attendees

Event registrations

- 37% of registrants identified as living with a disability
- 31% identified as a carer, family or kinship group member of a person with disability
- 39% identified as a disability advocate
- 37% identified as a researcher
- 21% identified as being in a government or regulator role
- 8% identified as a service provider

Event engagement

- Attended: 85% of registrants attended (126 attendees out of 148 registered for the event)
- Feedback: 26% of attendees responded to the survey (33 out of 126)

Event and presentations ratings

The event received overwhelmingly positive feedback with 100% rated the event as Excellent or Very Good and 73% gave the presentations and discussions a 5/5 rating; 27% gave 4/5.

Supports

While this event focused on mobilising evidence for action, we acknowledge that some of the content may have been challenging. Discussions included personal experiences, systemic barriers, and the impact of exclusionary policies and practices. If you feel upset or need support, click here for services that can help.

Feedback

We invite feedback on all aspects of our work. Please access the event feedback survey here.

Acknowledgments and thanks

The NDRP would like to extend our heartfelt thanks to our collaborators, all speakers, panellists, breakout room facilitators, note takers, our access and inclusion partners, and attendees who made this event a success.

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