National Disability Research Partnership

What to expect from the Evidence to Action Event

Doing research together:

Supporting inclusive and collaborative research partnerships

13 October 2025

National Disability Research Partnership

Summary

About the National Disability Research Partnership

The National Disability Research Partnership (NDRP) funds research led by and with people with disability. Its purpose is to build a national disability research program in Australia that builds evidence for policy and practice to advance the rights of people with disability.

The NDRP wants research to lead to real world solutions. This means working together with people with disability and their organisations, government, service providers, and the community.

Evidence to action

The NDRP holds 'evidence to action' events to talk about what is known about a certain topic, what is not known, and what research is needed. The goal of these events is to work together and inform future research and policy directions.

What is this event about

This event is about Supporting inclusive and collaborative research partnerships. This fourth event in the *Evidence to Action* series focuses on how researchers and advocacy organisations work together in partnership and collaboration in research. It builds on our July 2025 session bridging the gap between research and real-world impact, particularly in policy. It also builds on our May 2025 session, where Professor Erin Wilson reminded us that knowledge mobilisation starts at the beginning of research, not the end.

This event will delve into practical ways researchers and advocacy organisations can collaborate effectively, highlighting the value of co-design in disability research. Attendees will discover insights from fresh studies on what advocacy groups need to be active partners and explore hands-on tools designed to foster ethical, impactful, and resilient research partnerships.

What you will find in this document

- the agenda for the event on 13 October 2025 with what is being covered and for how long,
- who will speak in each session,
- questions people often ask,
- links to websites for the organisations that will feature in the event, and
- more information about the speakers.

National Disability Research Partnership

The agenda (updated with interaction levels)

12:00 pm AEDT – Session 1 (15 mins) Welcome and Acknowledgement of Country (low interaction)

- 5 mins: Mary Sayers (CEO of the NDRP), opens the event, welcomes attendees and explains about the event including accessibility features.
- 10 mins: Mary will provide more detail on why advocacy organisations are so important in disability research and overview of the resource pack. (short video explanation here)

12:15 pm AEDT – Session 2 (15 mins) Launch of the Disability Advocacy Network Australia (DANA) Report (low interaction)

- 15 mins: Mary introduces Cherry Baylosis who shares the key findings and recommendations of the Report: *Co-design Partnerships: A Mutual Exchange* which was funded by the NDRP and developed by DANA together with advocacy organisations.

12:30 pm AEDT – Session 3 (35 mins) Advocacy 101: Who's who and what they do (medium interaction)

- 5 mins: Jade McEwan will introduce the speakers and the next session.
- 20 mins: Speakers from advocacy organisations will share who they are and what they do. (Short video explanation here) They will discuss how they work with researchers and what researchers might need to know.
    - Women with Disabilities Australia (WWDA)
    - Inclusion Australia
    - Blind Citizens Australia
    - People with Disability Australia (PWDA)
- 10 mins: Jade will explain the resources available to help and check in with the audience.

1:05 pm AEDT – Screen Break (10 mins)

1:15 pm AEDT – Session 4 (30 mins) Building respectful partnerships (medium interaction)

- 5 mins: Linda Steele will introduce the speakers and the next session.
- 15 mins: Linda will ask speakers to "bust" three common myths. They will share a brief story to challenge and correct these myths.

  - People with Disability Australia (PWDA)
  - Australian Autism Alliance
  - Physical Disability Australia

- **10 mins:** Linda will explain the resources available to help and check in with the audience.

1:45 pm AEDT – Session 5 (30 mins) Resourcing partnerships fairly (medium interaction)

- **5 mins:** Mary will introduce the speakers and the theme of why sharing time, money, and information fairly is critical for real partnerships.

- **20 mins:** Speakers from advocacy organisations explain why sharing time, money, and information fairly is critical for real partnerships.

  - People with Disability Australia (PWDA)
  - Inclusion Australia

- **5 mins:** Mary will explain the resources available to help and check in with the audience.

2:15 pm AEDT – Screen Break (10 mins)

2:25 pm AEDT – Session 6 (25 mins) Lessons from practice (medium interaction)

- **5 mins:** Dennis Petrie will introduce the speakers.

- **15 mins:** Speakers from advocacy organisations and researchers will discuss things that went well in a partnership and what they would change.

  - Children and Young People with Disability Australia (CYDA)

- **5 mins:** Dennis will explain the resources available to help and check in with the audience.

2:50 pm AEDT – Session 7 (10 mins) Closing and next steps (medium interaction)

- **5 mins:** Commitment Wall - Mary will invite everyone to type one action they will take into the chat. Mary will share some and advocacy leaders respond: *"This would make a difference because…"* (time permitting)

- **5 mins:** Final reflection - Mary will share the resources for ongoing use and close with: *"Partnerships start with understanding – what's your next step?"*

National Disability Research Partnership

How much will I need to participate in each session? (NEW)

The agenda shows the *level of interaction* for each session. We've also included a legend that explains what *low, medium, and high interaction* mean.

- Low interaction or listen and reflect: Mostly listening. You can reflect quietly or take notes, but no need to contribute in the chat.
- Medium interaction or chat and share: You may be invited to share a thought or question in the chat or the Q&A function. Contribution is optional but welcome.
- High interaction or interactive: You'll be invited to actively contribute (e.g. type an action into the chat, add a question in the Q&A, respond to prompts, or join discussion). A communication order will be used so you know when it's your turn and how to contribute.

National Disability Research Partnership

People who will speak

Session 1 – Welcome

Mary Sayers (NDRP) Event Host
CEO of the National Disability Research Partnership, Mary leads NDRP's mission purpose to fund and support research by and with people with disability that delivers real-world impact.

Session 2 – Launch of the DANA Report

Dr Cherry Baylosis (DANA)
Director of Policy and Advocacy at the Disability Advocacy Network Australia, Cherry leads DANA's policy, research, and advocacy work supporting Australia's independent advocacy sector.

Session 3 – Advocacy 101: Who's who and what they do

Dr Jade McEwen – Researcher and session guide
Diana Piantedosi (WWDA) – Senior Manager, Policy and Advocacy
Luke Nelson (Inclusion Australia) – Systemic and lived experience advocate
Melanie Chatfield (Blind Citizens Australia) – National Policy Officer
Julian Laurens (People with Disability Australia PWDA) – Senior Policy Officer

Session 4 – Building respectful partnerships

Prof Linda Steele (UTS) – Researcher and session guide
Megan Spindler-Smith (PWDA) – Acting CEO
Jenny Karavolos (Australian Autism Alliance) – Co-Chair
Jeremy Muir (Physical Disability Australia) – CEO and Sarah McInnes - Policy and Project Officer
Martin Butcher (National Centre for Disability Advocacy) – Manager

Session 5 – Resourcing partnerships fairly

Mary Sayers – Session guide
Michelle Keogh (PWDA) – Acting Director of Systemic Advocacy
Dr Amy Conley Wright (Inclusion Australia) – Policy and Advocacy Manager

Session 6 – Lessons from practice

Prof Dennis Petrie (Monash University) – Health economist and session guide
Dr Tess Altman and Dr Liz Hudson (CYDA) – Policy and Research Officers
Dr Catherine Smith (University of Melbourne) – Senior Lecturer, Wellbeing Science

National Disability Research Partnership

Frequently asked questions

Will the event be recorded?

Yes, all sessions will be recorded and will be made available on the NDRP YouTube channel. At the start of the session, the facilitator will let everyone know that the event is being recorded.

If you do not want to be recorded, you can turn off your camera.

What if I have technical difficulties or need help?

We will have support available to assist. You can send a message in the Zoom Chat or Q&A function or email Sue Tape, Head of Evidence to Action who is organising this event at info@ndrp.org.au.

Can I take a break?

Yes, there will be breaks. You are also welcome to take additional breaks whenever you need to. You are welcome to stay in the event during these breaks.

Will there be captioning and Auslan?

Yes, captions and Auslan interpretation will be available during the event. A professional captioner will type what is said for accuracy. To turn captions on or off, click the “More” button (three dots) in the Zoom menu and select “Captions.”

Who will be attending?

Attendees will include people with disability, family members, researchers, policymakers, advocates, service providers, and government representatives.

How can I give feedback on the event?

We invite feedback on all aspects of our work. Please access the event feedback survey here. Or you can send an email to info@ndrp.org.au

More information about organisations

Here is a list of national-level Disabled People's Organisations (DPOs) and Disability Representative Organisations (DROs)that work across Australia to represent and advocate for people with disability. Representatives from the following organisations will be speaking at the event.

- Disability Advocacy Network Australia (DANA) the national representative body for a network of independent disability advocacy organisations in Australia. They also host the National Centre for Disability Advocacy.
- People with Disability Australia representing all people with disability, including LGBTIQA+ people with disability
- Women with Disabilities Australia representing women and girls with disability
- Children and Young People with Disability Australia representing children and young people with disability
- Inclusion Australia representing people with intellectual disability
- Physical Disability Australia representing people with physical disability
- Autism Alliance National representing people with disability, with a focus on autism
- Blind Citizens Australia representing people who ae blind or vision impaired

To find out more about the other national organisations you can visit their websites:

- First Peoples Disability Network Australia representing First Nations People with disability
- National Ethnic Disability Alliance representing culturally and linguistically diverse people with disability
- Australian Federation of Disability Organisations consortium representing all people with disability and people with disability with sensory impairments
- Down Syndrome Australia consortium representing people with intellectual disability, with a focus on chromosomal variations
- Deaf Australia representing people who are Deaf or hard of hearing
- Community Mental Health Australia consortium representing people with psychosocial disability

National Disability Research Partnership

More information about our speakers (NEW)

Mary Sayers: NDRP Host, Session guide and Chief Executive Officer

Mary Sayers (she/her) leads the NDRP, driving inclusive research by and with people with disability. She has family and personal experience of disability. With extensive experience in policy and systems change, she is committed to research that delivers real-world benefits and empowers people with disability.

Dr. Cherry Baylosis: Director of Policy and Advocacy, Disability Advocacy Network Australia (DANA)

Dr. Cherry Baylosis (she/her) is the Director of Policy and Advocacy at DANA. She is responsible for DANA's policy advocacy team, strategic communications, co-design research and activities, and secretariat programs. She also has a research focus on participatory and co-design research methods that give voice to people with psychosocial disability.

Dr. Jade McEwen: Session guide for this event

Dr. Jade McEwen (she/her) is a researcher and evaluator who specialises in social policy, disability, and human rights. She is a member of the NDRP Research Committee and has over 23 years of experience in disability services in Australia and overseas. She has lived experience of disability and values co-design approaches that put people with disability at the centre of research and decision-making.

Diana Piantedosi: Advocate and researcher

Diana Piantedosi (she/they) is the Senior Manager, Policy & Advocacy at the peak body for women with disabilities in Australia (WWDA). As a passionate advocate and researcher, Diana is dedicated to advancing disability and gender equity. Their work is informed by academic expertise, practical and lived experience, with a focus on the intersections of gender, sexuality, and disability.

Luke Nelson: Systemic and lived experience advocate

Luke Nelson (he/him) has been a disability advocate for 18 years, through his roles with Inclusion Australia and VALID. He has played an important role in supported decision-making policy creation. He has also served on reference groups, presented to social work students and supported people with an intellectual disability to understand their rights. He attended the 18th Conference of State Parties and spoke before the United Nations.

Melanie Chatfield: Systemic and lived experience advocate

Melanie Chatfield (she/her) is the National Policy Officer at Blind Citizens Australia. With over 20 years' experience as a public health professional, Melanie specialises in strategy, policy,

procurement, stakeholder engagement, and service improvement across government and not-for-profit sectors. Melanie is dedicated to advancing health, wellbeing, equity, and inclusion.

Julian Laurens: Advocate and researcher

Julian Laurens (he/him) is a Senior Policy Officer with expertise in disability rights, policy development, and systemic advocacy. He works to strengthen inclusive research and policy by building connections between government, advocacy organisations, and the community. Julian brings a strong commitment to ensuring that the voices of people with disability are centred in decision-making and that policies translate into practical, equitable change.

Professor Linda Steele: Session guide for this event

Linda Steele (she/her) is Professor at University of Technology Sydney, and a socio-legal researcher focused on disability, law, and social justice. Her work explores the legal and social systems affecting people with disability, informed by her background as a solicitor in disability rights.

Megan Spindler-Smith: Systemic and lived experience advocate

Megan Spindler-Smith (they/them) is the Acting CEO of People with Disability Australia. They bring lived experience as a person with disability and expertise in strategic leadership, diversity, and cultural change. Megan has held senior roles at Yooralla, ABC, University of Technology Sydney, and the NSW Department of Education and is a passionate advocate for intersectional disability rights and inclusion.

Jenny Karavolos: Systemic advocate

Jenny Karavolos (she/her) is the Co-Chair of the Australian Autism Alliance, and CEO of DACSSA (Disability Advocacy & Complaints Service of SA Inc). Jenny has held senior roles in disability and defence including on various boards specialising in governance, advocacy, organisational transformation, systems thinking and innovation. She has led national disability policy submissions, is on several NDIS reform groups and secured pre-election commitments for the National Autism Strategy and Autism National Health/Mental Health Roadmap. Jenny is the parent of a gorgeous Autistic young person.

Jeremy Muir: Systemic and lived experience advocate

Jeremy Muir (he/him) is CEO of Physical Disability Australia, bringing over 40 years' lived experience and extensive expertise in disability advocacy, policy, and leadership. He has led national disability policy submissions, facilitated inclusion workshops, and advised government ministers on program design and community engagement. A champion of inclusion in higher education, Jeremy has developed disability support programs and driven accessibility strategies.

Sarah McInnes: Systemic advocate

Sarah McInnes (she/her) is Policy and Project Officer at Physical Disability Australia. A Law (Honours) graduate and passionate disability advocate with lived experience, Sarah specialises in stakeholder engagement, policy research, and systemic advocacy. She has led law reform submissions, facilitated self-advocacy workshops, and supported people navigating the NDIS, Centrelink, housing, and education systems.

Martin Butcher: Systemic and lived experience advocate

Martin Butcher (he/him) leads the National Centre for Disability Advocacy, supporting and strengthening Australia's independent advocacy sector. He brings decades of experience in disability advocacy and a strong focus on building inclusive, collaborative partnerships between advocacy organisations and researchers. Born with cerebral palsy, Martin draws on his lived experience to challenge prejudice and promote access and inclusion for people with disability.

Michelle Keogh: Systemic advocate

Michelle Keogh (she/her) is Acting Director of Systemic Advocacy at People with Disability Australia (PWDA), with over 25 years' experience in service design, policy, and systemic advocacy in Ireland and Australia. She is committed to advancing human rights, safeguarding, and improving responses to Domestic and Family Violence, especially for children. Michelle is committed to evidence-based, trauma-informed approaches and has led significant policy reforms across the sector.

Dr. Amy Conley Wright: Advocate and researcher

Dr. Amy Conley Wright (she/her) is Policy and Advocacy Manager at Inclusion Australia, where she advocates for inclusive policy and services for people with an intellectual disability and their families. She is also Professor of Child and Family Social Work at the University of Sydney, where she conducts research on family support, advocacy, disability, and out-of-home care. She brings lived experience as a parent of a child with disabilities.

Professor Dennis Petrie: Session guide for this event

Prof. Dennis Petrie (he/him) is based at the Centre for Health Economics, Monash University, and is known for his research on the economics of disability and health inequalities. He has co-authored the new Disability Wellbeing Index, developed by and for people with disability, with support from the NDIA. This groundbreaking Index aims to measure outcomes, improve services, and guide disability policy across Australia.

Dr. Tess Altman: Advocate and researcher

Dr Tess Altman (she/her) is a Policy and Research Coordinator at Children and Young People with Disability Australia (CYDA) and Senior Research Associate at the UNSW Kaldor Centre for International Refugee Law, with over 16 years' experience across academic, government, and NGO sectors in Australia and internationally. Holding a PhD in Anthropology, Tess has worked with refugee/asylum, LGBTIQA+, multicultural, and First Nations communities. She values (and contributes to) lived experience in research and advocacy.

Dr. Eliabeth (Liz) Hudson: Advocate and researcher

Liz (she/her) Liz is the Policy and Research Manager at not for profit advocacy organisation, Children and Young People with Disability Australia since 2021 where she has been accountable for large multiyear codesign projects. She is also the former Research Manager at a national not-for-profit human services organisation. As Research Manager, she was responsible for a small team whose role was to explore national and international best practice within the disability, community service and mental health sectors through partnered research with universities, government and other community organisations. Liz Hudson is also the former CEO of a specialised mental health and disability employment service and has 20 years' experience working in management roles in the community/employment industry.

Dr. Catherine Smith: Researcher

Dr. Catherine Smith (she/her) is a Senior Lecturer of Wellbeing Science and Director of Student Experience, Melbourne Graduate School of Education, The University of Melbourne. Her work focuses on social justice, care, and the intersection of policy and practice, with expertise in forced migration, equity, education, and wellbeing. With over 30 years' experience in education and policy reform across several countries, Catherine is committed to universal design and equitable access in both physical and digital learning environments.

END