



What to expect from Session 1

Co-designing research: 101

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Summary

About the National Disability Research Partnership

The National Disability Research Partnership (NDRP) funds research led by and with people with disability. Our vision is policy and practice in Australia are transformed by disability-led research. The NDRP prioritises co-design, collaboration, and accessibility, ensuring people with disability are not just participants but leaders and co-creators of research.

The NDRP will open its first round of funding in 2025 ([Round 1](#)) on 17 March 2025.

There will be two funding streams:

- Seed funding for projects to co-design research about safety of people with disability
- Projects to synthesise knowledge about safety of people with disability

To ensure people have the information and guidance to develop strong, competitive applications, the NDRP is planning a range of information and activities.

Why is the NDRP running these sessions?

The NDRP is supporting more people and organisations to lead, create, and use research led by and with people with disability. This aligns with NDRP [Guiding Principles](#) and we are focused on research that makes a real impact on policy and practice. The information and guidance are a key part of [NDRP's strategy and workplan](#) to support people with disability, researchers, organisations, and policymakers—to engage meaningfully in the disability-led and inclusive research we fund.

What you will find in this document

- the agenda for the session on 20 February 2025, with names and times,
- details about the speakers,
- information to help you get ready,
- questions people often ask, and
- some of the key terms explained in plain language.



The agenda

Thursday 20 February 2025 1-3pm AEDT (120 minutes)

1:00 pm AEDT – Session 1 (10 mins) - Welcome and Acknowledgment of Country

- 5 mins: Mary Sayers, CEO, NDRP, opens the event and provides a brief overview of the research program we will fund in 2025 and what is coming for the year.
- 5 mins: Housekeeping (accessibility features, recording notice, session overview).

1:10 pm AEDT – Session 2 (20 mins) - Introduction to co-design and co-production

- 10 mins: Gillian Mason, Head of Research Program, NDRP explains the role of co-design in impactful research.
- 10 mins: How co-design fits within co-production and aligns with NDRP principles and values.

1:30 pm AEDT – Session 3 (20 mins) - Case study showcase 1 '*Voices of Deaf & Hard of Hearing Mob*'

- 10 mins: The project team will share their work that shows co-design in action, including project design, inclusive methods, and outcomes.
- 10 mins: The project team will share their lessons learned and the impact of their work.

1:50 pm AEDT – Screen Break (5 mins)

1:55 pm AEDT – Session 4 (30 mins) - Case study showcase 2 *Summer Foundation*

- 10 mins: A PHD student will talk about the use of an advisory group and co-designing research from the beginning.
- 20 mins: A project team will share their lessons learned from a co-design project, including, co-designing resources and evaluating those resources.

2:25 pm AEDT – Session 5 (25 mins) - Panel discussion and Q&A

- 15 mins: The case study presenters and other experts discuss challenges, best practices, and tips for integrating co-design into research proposals.
- 10 mins: Open forum for attendees to ask questions ([option to submit in advance](#)).

2:50 pm AEDT – Session 6 (10 mins) - Close and next steps

- 10 mins: Mary and Gillian discuss key takeaways and next steps.



Speakers

CO-DESIGNING RESEARCH
NDRP Host

NDRP



Mary Sayers – CEO, National Disability Research Partnership (NDRP)

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.

CO-DESIGNING RESEARCH
NDRP Speaker

NDRP



Gillian Mason – Head of Research Program, NDRP

Gillian Mason (she/her) is a disabled researcher, physiotherapist, and science communicator. She has experience in co-design, co-production, and disability-inclusive research. Her approach is informed by her lived experience as a participant, end-user, and co-designer of research.

CO-DESIGNING RESEARCH
Speaker

NDRP



Dr Alexandra Devine – Senior Research Fellow, The University of Melbourne

Dr Alexandra Devine is a Research Fellow at the University of Melbourne and a member of the NDRP Research Committee. She co-led the Hey! Hear Me Out! research project, funded by the NDRP. Her recent work includes the Bina Gurri project, supporting First Nations people who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing.

CO-DESIGNING RESEARCH
Speaker

NDRP



Jody Barney – Deaf Indigenous Community Consultancy

Jody Barney (she/her) is a proud Deaf woman from Queensland and the founder of Deaf Indigenous Community Consultancy. She co-led the Hey! Hear Me Out! research project, funded by the NDRP. With 35+ years of advocacy, she specialises in Indigenous sign languages, access to justice, and disability support. Jody is Chair of Koondee Woonga-gat Toor-rong, a First Nations-led philanthropy organisation.



National Disability Research Partnership

CO-DESIGNING RESEARCH
Speaker



Kate
D'Cruz

Dr Kate D'Cruz – Senior Research Fellow, Summer Foundation

Dr Kate D'Cruz (she/her) is an occupational therapy researcher focused on acquired neurological disability, person-centred practice, and co-design. She has expertise in qualitative research and supporting people with lived experience to participate in research and co-design.

CO-DESIGNING RESEARCH
Speaker



Stacey
Oliver

Dr Stacey Oliver – Senior Research Fellow, Summer Foundation

Dr Stacey Oliver (she/her) is a psychology researcher with 10 years of experience managing large-scale projects. Her work focuses on housing, healthcare, and disability policy, examining how interventions impact psychosocial and health outcomes. She completed a PhD on motivation, choice architecture, and urban design.

CO-DESIGNING RESEARCH
Speaker



Mark
Brown

Dr Mark Brown – Senior Research Fellow, Summer Foundation

Dr Mark Brown (he/him) earned a PhD in Psychology in 2013, researching health-related cognition and risk judgement. A lifelong power wheelchair user, he has since worked as a researcher, analyst, and consultant across government, private, and non-profit sectors in disability research and policy.

CO-DESIGNING RESEARCH
Speaker



Cornelia
Wellecke

Cornelia Wellecke, Doctoral Researcher, Summer Foundation

Cornelia Wellecke (she/her) is currently completing a PhD in collaboration with La Trobe University's Living with Disability Research Centre and the Summer Foundation. Her research focuses on peer support for adults with acquired neurological disability. In addition to her PhD, Cornelia is coordinating research projects at the Summer Foundation that aim to establish an evidence base regarding the supply and demand for accessible housing.



Case studies

Voices of Deaf & Hard of Hearing Mob on the NDIS in the NT

HEY, HEAR ME OUT!

This project, funded by the NDRP, aimed to understand what helps, and what makes it hard for First Nations NDIS participants who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing, to use their NDIS plans in a way that meet their needs and aspirations.

- The research team had co-lead investigators: one with and one without disability.
- The project first focused on co-designing research methods to make sure they were inclusive, accessible and culturally sensitive.
- All data collected by people with disability.
- A key focus was making sure the findings from the research were shared with the community.

[Read more here on the NDRP website.](#)

Summer Foundation

The Summer Foundation conducts research to improve housing and support for people with disability who need 24/7 assistance. The [Summer Foundation and La Trobe University's Living with Disability Research Centre](#) work together to apply research to real-world issues. Their research program aims to:

- Understand the needs of people with disability, effective approaches, and barriers in current systems.
- Design evaluation frameworks, new solutions, and services through co-design.
- Evaluate the impact of policies, services, and pilot programs.

Example projects to be discussed

- Co-designing resources to support people in disability accommodation, to exercise choice, control and agency about their home and living environment. This project included the co-design of a tool to assess the accessibility and usefulness of the produced resources.
- Peer support research led by a PhD candidate, using a reference group to explore peer support models.

[Read more on the Summer Foundation website.](#)



Frequently asked questions

What can I do to prepare?

We encourage all attendees to familiarise themselves with key documents before the session:

- The NDRP 2025 Funding [announcement](#)
- The NDRP [Research Agenda](#) and in particular, page 17 of the PDF document for more detail for the Round 1 topic of Safety
- NDRP [Guiding Principles](#)

You can think about some things before the session, such as:

- How can research teams genuinely reflect co-design principles?
- What strategies can research teams use to involve people with disability meaningfully in all stages of research?
- What supports or resources might we need to strengthen co-design in our work?

How can I participate in the Session?

We want everyone to feel comfortable participating in a way that suits them during this session.

Here's how you can engage:

- **Ask questions:** Use the Chat feature to ask questions at any time. Our facilitators will review and read out questions, during the Q&A session so everyone engage with the discussion. You can also use the Chat feature to share your thoughts or ideas throughout the session.
- **Updating your profile name in Zoom:** We encourage you to update your profile name in Zoom to reflect your name and pronouns.

Will the session be recorded?

Yes, the session will be recorded and will be made available on the [NDRP YouTube channel](#). This session will be recorded so we can share it with those unable to attend live. The recording will include what is shared during the session.



Can I take a break?

Yes, there will be a 5 minute break after about 45 mins. You are also welcome to take additional breaks whenever you need to. You are welcome to stay in the session during these breaks.

Will there be captioning?

Yes, captions will be available during the session. 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.”

Will there be Auslan interpreters?

Yes, Auslan interpreters will be available for the whole session.

Who will be attending?

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

What if my question doesn't get answered in the session?

If your question isn't answered, or if you have additional questions afterward, you can email us at info@ndrp.org.au. If questions arise at these sessions, then they will be published in the FAQ section on the [NDRP website](#) to ensure all applicants have access to the same information.

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 function or email Sue Tape, Head of Evidence to Action who is organising this event at info@ndrp.org.au.

Please take care of yourself and your wellbeing during these conversations. If you feel upset or need support, [click here for services that can help](#).



Key terms

Co-design

Co-design is a term that is being used often, and to mean different things! When we say co-design, we don't mean consultation or engagement. The 'co' is about being collaborative. The 'design' means making something. In the co-design of research, this means working together to come up with ideas, possible solutions, outcomes, approaches and methods that could be used in a future research project. Design usually means doing this over a few rounds of testing, and refining with each other, before final decisions are made. Co-design needs shared understanding, access and relationships to be established before the design can start.

Co-production

Co-design is one part of co-production. Co-production means working collaboratively, in ways that respect different ways of being, as well as different sources of knowledge, to deliver an outcome. Other terms such as co-creation, or participatory ways of working are sometimes used interchangeably.

Person with disability

NDRP recognises the diversity of people with disability. Disability may impact participation in society due to barriers, but it can also be an important part of identity. Some, like Autistic and Deaf communities, may not identify as disabled. NDRP aims to be inclusive of all disability experiences.¹

Disability-led research

Disability-led research ensures people with disability have meaningful roles and influence throughout the project. Leadership may be through researchers with disability, Disabled People's Organisations, individuals in key positions, or governance structures that support genuine involvement.

Disability-inclusive research

This means valuing and involving people with disability at every stage of research—from shaping ideas to conducting studies and sharing findings in accessible ways.

High-quality research

High-quality research is ethical, rigorous, and transparent. It builds on existing knowledge, asks clear questions, and uses reliable methods. In the NDRP context, this cannot happen without the leadership and involvement of people with disability.

¹ United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2006)



Leading and learning together

Producing great research requires investment in people, systems, and infrastructure. It also needs a culture of care and collaboration, ensuring researchers and communities have the skills, resources, and support to do and use research.

Knowledge

Knowledge comes from academic and community research, lived, cultural, and service experience, and practical expertise.

Knowledge mobilisation

This means making knowledge ready for action—sharing, exchanging, and making sense of it in ways that are useful and accessible for co-designing research.

Knowledge synthesis

Bringing together what is known about a topic in a rigorous and transparent way to assess and summarise key insights.

Evidence for action

Research that is designed to inform real-world policy, programs, and practices for people with disability.

Intersectionality

“We do not live single-issue lives” – Audre Lorde². Intersectionality recognises that different aspects of identity—such as race, gender, disability, and class—intersect to create unique experiences of discrimination or privilege. Research must consider these complexities, especially for marginalised groups.

Cultural competence

Having the skills, knowledge and experience to work ethically and effectively where there is more than one culture at play. To be culturally competent means having an understanding of one’s own cultural values and world view, and an awareness that people have different needs because of their own cultural or linguistic background. It means that people and organisations consider and respond to cultural diversity and difference.³

Cultural safety

Ensuring people feel socially, emotionally, and spiritually safe, free from racism or discrimination. Cultural safety is determined by the people and communities involved, not by simply following a checklist of practices.

² Sins Invalid. (2015). 10 principles of disability justice. Sins Invalid. <https://sinsinvalid.org/10-principles-of-disability-justice/>

³ Federation of Ethnic Communities’ Councils of Australia 2019, Cultural competence in Australia: a guide, FECCA, Deakin, Link: <http://fecca.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/Cultural-Competence-in-Australia-A-Guide.pdf>