



Framework to support the NDRP Research Agenda

Background

The NDRP is an innovation in Australia as the first national disability research partnership. There are research centres in Australia focusing on disability research involving partnerships, but these are university-based, state-based or have limited stakeholder participation, rather than national. As its name implies, the core business of the NDRP is disability research conducted within a partnership framework, so it is both shaped by its partners and influences its partners and beyond.

The NDRP Agenda and Research Framework articulates the NDRP's terms of engagement in disability research. This will assist NDRP to stay on task, to monitor its disability research activities, and to make a transparent and accountable statement to external stakeholders about the NDRP's role in disability research, what it does and what it does not do.

The NDRP has developed guiding principles that underpin its work (read more here: [NDRP Principles](#)). This document explains how these principles will inform the NDRP's core business of disability research. This will form part of the NDRP Research Agenda and Framework which will provide structure and guidance for how the NDRP will fund research, build capacity and share evidence.

How the NDRP will engage in research

The NDRP Research Framework has the following nine components:

1. Leader in disability research
2. National structure and content
3. With people with disability
4. Partnership
5. Collaborative
6. Capacity building
7. Balanced
8. Flexible and responsive
9. Diverse funding sources

1. Leader in disability research

Lead best practice in disability research

The NDRP aims to be a leader in advocating for and promoting disability research in Australia. It will:

- guide government and other research agencies to implement inclusive disability policies and practices



- develop best practices in collaborative research by and with people with disability
- respond to the priorities of people with disability
- build capacity for people with disability and their representative organisations to engage in research.

Advance high quality disability research

The NDRP will fund competitive research and will also directly commission some research. To achieve the expansion of disability research, the NDRP also aims to take a lead in advocating that other research agencies and organisations should include disability research priorities in their grant schemes. The NDRP will not fund medical research, defined here as laboratory-based studies, clinical studies and group/community-based studies that aim to understand the causes, treatment and/or prevention of human diseases and/or the maintenance of human health¹.

Build an evidence base that informs Australian disability policy and practice

The NDRP aims to build a strong and up to date evidence base for disability policy and practice. To this end the NDRP will fund new research; it will not repeat research that has already been done. The NDRP's intention to produce evidence reviews will assist in understanding research that is already completed.

2. National structure and content

The NDRP will strive to expand disability research across all states and territories. It will also seek to build international collaborations over time. The NDRP takes as its foundation the rights-based approach from the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health.

The NDRP will work to involve all parts of the national disability community, including national Disabled People's Organisations (DPOs), Disability Representative Organisations (DROs) and smaller organisations with specific interests or focus. The NDRP will also work to involve mainstream health and social welfare agencies that support people with disability in areas such as housing stress, food scarcity, children and young people care and protection matters, family violence, participation in education and access to justice.

3. With people with disability

The NDRP principles are about research done by and with people with disability. The NDRP will ensure that Principle 2: *Value the knowledge of people with disability in research* is implemented in all processes and practices under the NDRP Research Agenda and Framework. The NDRP will set new benchmarks in best practice in disability-inclusive research. By doing so and through its thought leadership, the NDRP will provide the much-needed evidence for

¹ Australian Government Australian Research Council Medical Research Policy December 2020 available at <https://www.arc.gov.au/about-arc/program-policies/medical-research-policy>. Accessed 14th February 2023.



forward looking disability policy and raise the standard of evidence-informed policy and practice in Australia.

4. Partnership

The NDRP will work in partnership with the disability community, valuing their knowledge and respecting different sources and forms of knowledge. The NDRP will also work in partnership with a broad range of partners such as funding agencies, governments and universities.

The NDRP recognises that partnerships with people with disability and their representative organisations may be fluid, responsive and can change according to the context and timing. The NDRP anticipates engaging sometimes in partnership with a large range of partners and at other times with only one or two partners.

The NDRP will learn how to achieve productive research partnerships with the disability community as experience builds over time. The NDRP Research Agenda and Framework (set to be finalised in June 2023) are not 'set in concrete' but understood as evolving and responsive to the changing priorities of the disability community and stakeholders.

5. Collaborative

The NDRP aims to demonstrate collaboration by bringing together researchers and people with disability and their representative organisations, to further progress and expand the use of research findings to inform advocacy.

The NDRP conceptualises research with and by people with disability as collaborative research. The Disability Innovation Institute at the University of New South Wales has produced freely available guides to the rationale behind and processes and practices of conducting inclusive research. Ongoing work at the Disability Innovation Institute is addressing shared governance, ethics, and benchmarking of collaborative, inclusive research.

The NDRP will demonstrate best practice in collaborative research for policy development, working together with policy makers and providing evidence-informed policy review and written submissions to government inquiries.

6. Capacity building

The NDRP principle *Value the knowledge of people with disability in research* encapsulates the NDRP's vision for self-determination and capacity building for people with disability to lead disability research into the future. The NDRP will work to build capacity of people with disability to do research, of DPOs and DROs to undertake, understand and disseminate research, and of funding agencies and organisations to fund disability research that aligns with the NDRP approach of research by and with people with disability. Capacity building broadly aims to build knowledge and skills to extend current capacity and to overcome skill and knowledge gaps.

7. Balanced

The NDRP will aim to balance its funding across the following main areas:



- building disability research capacity in individuals and organisations
- funding and commissioning research projects
- encouraging other research organisations to include disability in their grant schemes and to build capacity in inclusive disability research
- administering the NDRP Research Agenda and Framework
- providing capacity development programs for NDRP staff.

The NDRP will not fund medical research about disability.

8. Flexible and responsive

The NDRP will be flexible and responsive to the research interests and priorities of the disability community. The NDRP will engage collaboratively and meaningfully with people with disability and their organisations, addressing problems identified by people with disability themselves and emerging issues not yet being addressed by the disability community. The NDRP will adapt the research areas and timing outlined in the NDRP Research Agenda to take into account research demands of external circumstances such as the COVID-19 pandemic and similarly unanticipated events.

9. Diverse funding sources

While initial funding for the NDRP is entirely from government, the NDRP will seek to grow and diversify its funding sources to increase its impact and to support its independence.

As a partnership, the NDRP will work collaboratively to build disability research and capacity in disability research across Australia. The NDRP will seek to build shared priorities and mutual respect amongst all its stakeholders over time, based on a recognition of each partners' strengths so that the influence of the NDRP grows nationally and internationally.