



2022



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NATIONAL DISABILITY RESEARCH PARTNERSHIP

Governance recommendation:
who should run the NDRP
and how?



Contents

About the National Disability Research Partnership	04
Overview	06
Corporate Structure and Membership	06
NDRP Board	06
Initial NDRP Board and Casual Vacancies	08
Board Committees	08
Research and Development Committee	09
NDRP Independent Advisory Council	10
NDRP Annual and Strategic Plan	10
Partners	10
Intellectual Property	11
Governance Review	11
Thank you	12

About the National Disability Research Partnership

The vision for the National Disability Research Partnership (NDRP) is to facilitate a collaborative and inclusive disability research program that builds the evidence for developing policy and practice decisions.

It will achieve this by funding research that is informed by a NDRP research agenda which has been developed with stakeholders; ensuring all research is inclusive of people with disability; building disability research capacity; and supporting the uptake of research findings into policy and practice.

Sharing knowledge and evidence is key to the impact and success of NDRP.

Learnings and Recommendations

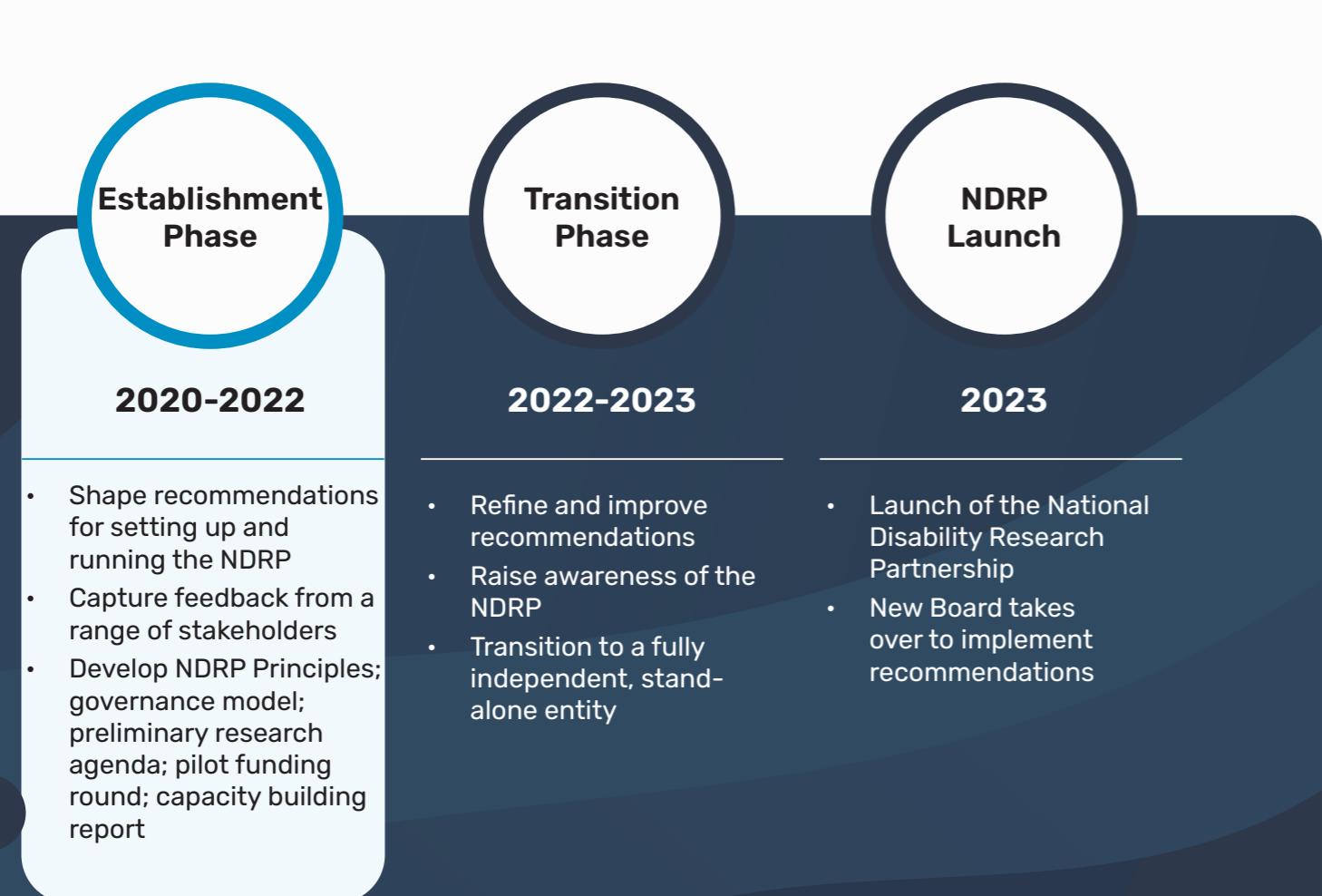
A two-year Establishment Phase was tasked with setting up the structure and processes for a longer-term disability research partnership in Australia.

This phase was steered by a Working Party made up of advocates, academics and

independent advisors; six of the 13 members have a disability. The Establishment Phase ran from June 2020 to June 2022, during which the NDRP Working Party reached out to the disability community for advice and feedback.

The full report '*NDRP Learnings and Recommendations*' details recommendations for setting up and running a National Disability Research Partnership, based on feedback from a range of stakeholders.

This recommended governance approach paper should be read together with the full report and details more information about who should run the NDRP and why. Click here to read the report: [*NDRP Learnings and Recommendations*](#)



NDRP Guiding Principles

1 High quality, collaborative research

- Become a world-leading driver of disability research that builds an evidence base
- Advance disability research in Australia by delivering on the National Disability Research Agenda
- Draw on expertise across Australia through collaborative research teams
- Australian policy to be informed by research and evidence

2 People with disability at the centre

- Inclusive research by and with people with disability who hold genuine decision making power
- Genuine, paid for, co-design with people with disability
- Research that addresses the priorities of people with disability
- Research that specifically addresses people with disability who:
 - require support to express their will and preference, and to implement their decisions
 - experience intersectional disadvantage

3 Value all forms of knowledge

- Recognise and value the knowledge that people with disability contribute to research based on their lived experience
- Respect for different sources and forms of knowledge
- Make knowledge accessible to the community in a range of formats

4 Build research capacity

- Build effective, system-wide disability research capacity
- Create career pathways and targeted support for researchers with disability
- Build capacity of the disability sector to create and use knowledge

Overview

This document sets out a recommended governance approach for the NDRP. It is designed to reflect the NDRP Principles and includes recommendations on corporate structure, membership, the Board, Board committees and intellectual property.

Corporate Structure and Membership

It is recommended that the NDRP should be set up as a company limited by guarantee, with Deductible Gift Recipient status.

As a company limited by guarantee, governing powers will rest with the members, as set out in the constitution.

The key recommendation is that the members should be any organisation or individual who meets one or more of the following criteria:

- Is a person with a disability or a family member, caregiver, friend or supporter of a person with a disability
- Represents and/or advocates for people with disability, their families and carers
- Provides services to people with disability
- Represents a Commonwealth, State or Territory Governments, or
- Undertakes research which is relevant to people with disability.

In addition, members should be required to abide by a member charter. The member charter should include commitments to adopt the NDRP Principles and commit to work in partnership with the NDRP. All members should be required to affirm annually that they have been operating in accordance with these Principles. For organisations, this annual attestation should be signed by both the Chair of the Board and the CEO. Individual members should sign the annual attestation in a personal capacity. All memberships should be subject to review by the Membership and Partnership Committee (with powers to exclude members). The proposed member charter is consistent with

the NDRP's need to engage members who share its values.

Membership fees should be \$100 per year (with a discount for concession card holders), to encourage and facilitate the widest possible membership of the NDRP.

The combination of a low membership fee and annual attestation creates a low financial barrier to being a NDRP member, but a significant requirement in terms of "living" the NDRP Principles.

NDRP Board

The Board should be skills based and consist of a maximum of 12 directors. Of these, three should be independent, including the Chair, seven should be elected by the members excluding any government members and two should be appointed by governments.

Among the elected Directors, the following should apply:

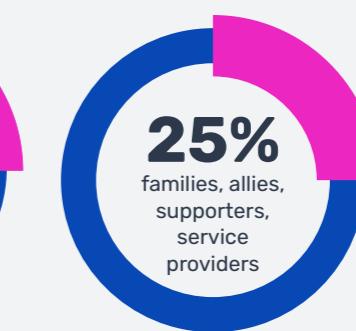
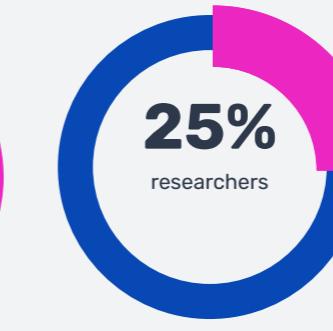
- At least 50% people with disability,
- At least 25% university/research institute/academic researchers/ community researchers,
- At least 25% families/care giver/friends/ supporters of people with disability/ disability service provider experience, and
- At least 15% First Nations or people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.

This structure will mean that at least some elected Directors will need to satisfy more than one of these selection criteria.

Ideally, there should also be gender balance and directors should come from geographically diverse locations.

The government appointed Directors should include one Commonwealth Government and one State Government appointee. The Commonwealth appointee should ideally have strong links to the National Disability Insurance Agency. The government appointed Directors should be at least at Deputy Secretary level to assist with keeping the NDRP updated on government views and priorities. The appointments of the government appointed Directors should

Board of Directors Minimum Requirements



At least some Elected Directors will need to satisfy more than one of these selection criteria.

be noted at a Disability Reform Ministers meeting.

Directors should be appointed for three years. The maximum term should be 3 terms or 9 years, whichever is shorter, in accordance with usual good governance processes.

Any person seeking appointment to the Board should be nominated by one member with endorsement from two other members.

Members should vote for the seven elected director positions.

All nominees would need to provide a short statement of their goals in seeking appointment to the NDRP Board and a statement of their skills and credentials, which should be aligned to an NDRP Board skills matrix. Key skills should include capacities and experience to contribute to the meaningfulness, productivity and sustainability of NDRP and skills in negotiating, conflict resolution and governance.

Not all directors will have this full range of skills and experience and so relevant training courses and mentoring should be made available. Any directors with an intellectual disability should receive additional support as needed.

The Board should meet 6-8 times per year and directors should receive remuneration of \$12,000 per annum and the Chair should receive \$24,000 per annum. Government appointed Directors would not be remunerated directly by the NDRP as they would be compensated through their normal remuneration as public servants. Once the Elected and Government Appointed Directors have been elected or appointed, they should be responsible for conducting a search for the independent chair and independent directors. These positions should be skills based taking account of the skills and experience of the elected and government appointed Directors.

The selection of the independent Chair is likely to have a major impact on the success of the NDRP and so special attention should be given to the necessary skills and attributes. The Chair should be a person with a disability and have all the requisite qualities of a chairperson in order to successfully establish the NDRP, liaise with government at highest level, be trusted by members and have exceptional networks.



Initial NDRP Board and Casual Vacancies

The process of appointing the initial independent Directors and Chair could be sped up by engaging a headhunter to present a list of potential candidates to the inaugural elected and government appointed Directors.

One half of the Initial Board should be appointed for three years and the other half should be appointed for two years, to provide for partial Board renewal thereafter while also retaining at least some experienced Directors.

This could be based on the number of votes received with those receiving the most votes being appointed for three years.

To ensure continuity with the NDRP Working Party, it could be wise to appoint two NDRP Working Party members to the initial Board.

In the event of a casual vacancy on the Board, the NDRP Board should decide whether or not to appoint someone to the casual vacancy for the balance of the Director's term. If the remaining term is less than 12 months the position should be left vacant.

If it is more than 12 months the Board should have the option of leaving it vacant or filling it. To fill the vacancy the Board should conduct an expression of interest process and appoint a new Director based on skills, ensuring the membership balance is maintained.

NDRP Board Committees

There should be the following Board committees:

- Audit and Risk
- Governance and Nominations
- Membership and Partnership
- Research and Development

These committees should have relatively standard terms of reference. The Audit and Risk Committee should be able to appoint up to two external members with appropriate skills to supplement the Committee if needed.

The Research and Development Committee which will play a particularly important role in the context of the NDRP and so is elaborated on below.

Research and Development Committee

The NDRP Research and Development Committee will report to the Board. Its role and functions are to assist the NDRP Board to meet its obligations to:

- facilitate a collaborative and inclusive disability research program that builds the evidence for successful innovation in policy and practice
- build, translate and disseminate the evidence base to inform policy and practice on issues and concerns impacting the lives of people with disability
- maintain the NDRP Research Agenda
- maintain up to date guidance on inclusive disability research methods
- conduct a regular grant funding round in line with annual allocation of funds for this purpose
- commission inclusive disability research projects in line with annual allocation of funds for this purpose
- consider the impact of research findings, who might benefit from what evidence and support connections between those who produce evidence, and those who use it

- build disability research capacity
- facilitate international research partnerships and collaborations, and
- recommend to the NDRP Board any other matters, concerns, issues or initiatives in relation to research and development that need to be addressed to meet the obligations of the NDRP Board.

The NDRP Research and Development Committee meetings should be convened and chaired by a member of the NDRP Board and meet as often as it deems necessary.

The Committee should include at least three members of the NDRP Board. The Committee may co-opt such other members of the community who share the NDRP principles and who bring additional skills, experience or networks.

The Committee could include ex-officio the Chief Executive Officer and could co-opt other staff to assist the Committee. The Committee could also establish working parties as needed.

For example, it may wish to establish a working party to consider research priorities, another to ensure rigorous, transparent selection processes and manage conflicts of interest and a further working party to focus on knowledge translation and facilitating connections with knowledge users.

NDRP Independent Advisory Council

NDRP should establish an Independent Advisory Council to provide advice to the NDRP Board on all matters of relevance. It should not provide advice on individual research proposals. The Council should be chaired by a member of the NDRP Board and include the Research and Development Committee Chair.

The membership of the NDRP Advisory Council should be broad and seek to include people with disability, their representative organisations, families, care giver, friends and supporters of people with disability, peak bodies, disability service providers and researchers. The Council should be broadly inclusive in terms of disabilities, severity, gender, location and ethnicity and all stakeholder groups and be designed to embrace diversity and different perspectives.

The NDRP Board should determine how many people are part of the Independent Advisory Council, how often it meets and whether meetings are held in person or virtual. All Council members should receive a sitting fee.

NDRP Annual and Strategic Plan

The NDRP, as an independent organisation with multiple funders and partners should prepare and publicise an annual plan as well as a strategic plan, approved by the Board. The NDRP should report to all stakeholders against these plans. The annual report should include a report from the Independent Advisory Council.

The Commonwealth Government, as the likely principal funder of the NDRP, will expect the NDRP to be independent, to utilise its funding efficiently and effectively and to facilitate research in line with the NDRP research agenda. Close engagement with the Commonwealth (and any other major funders) during the development of the annual and strategic plans, and reporting against the objectives and outcomes in the plans will be essential.

This approach is similar to the situation which has existed in the NDRP Establishment Phase and which has worked very well. In this first phase, the Department of Social Services provided seed funding to establish the NDRP through a grant to the Melbourne Disability Institute at the University of Melbourne. A work plan and regular engagement between the Melbourne Disability Institute and the Department of Social Services were established and operationalised effectively. This engagement should continue when the NDRP is established as separate corporate entity with a Board, through the annual and strategic planning processes.

The annual and strategic plan would include key aspects such as balancing funds to ensure maximum contributions to new research as well as knowledge translation and engagement strategies.

There should also be regular meetings held between NDRP management and the Department of Social Services, continuing the effective process used during the Establishment Phase. The outcomes from these meetings should be reported to the NDRP Board. In the event that State Governments contribute funding to the NDRP, they should be included in the proposed processes.

Partners

In addition to members, the NDRP is likely to have partners. Partners could include disability representative organisations, disability people's organisations, disability service providers, research institutes, universities or philanthropic foundations who are interested in a particularly close relationship with the NDRP and who are prepared to invest either cash or in-kind resources.

These partnerships should be referred on a case-by-case basis to the Membership and Partnership Committee for review and recommendation to the Board. Partners should have the same voting rights as members.



Intellectual Property

The intellectual property created through research funded by the NDRP should be owned by the NDRP. This is the approach recommended by the Autism Cooperative Research Centre, Australia's National Research Organisation for Women's Safety Limited (ANROWS) and Australian Research Alliance for Children and Youth (ARACY). This is recommended primarily to ensure the dissemination of research findings can be done in timely and accessible ways.

The NDRP should grant a non-exclusive, irrevocable, royalty-free licence to use, reproduce, publish and adapt the intellectual property created through the research to the researchers for non-commercial purposes.

The NDRP should also grant a non-exclusive, irrevocable, royalty-free licence to use, reproduce, publish and adapt the intellectual property created through the research to the Commonwealth Government (and possibly State and Territory Governments) for policy purposes.

Background intellectual property should be owned by whoever created it.

All NDRP outputs should be published under a Creative Commons licence, designed to maximise dissemination and ensure that NDRP research is used in accordance with the NDRP Principles.

In the case of commissioned research, the funder of the commissioned research would own the intellectual property and grant a non-exclusive, irrevocable, royalty-free licence to use, reproduce, publish and adapt the intellectual property created through the research to the NDRP and the researcher and commit to publishing the research as soon as practical in academic journals, mainstream media and in accessible formats.

Review

The governance arrangements should be independently reviewed after three years to ensure that these arrangements are working as intended and to advise on any changes.

Thank you

The members of the NDRP Working Party are humbled by the enormous opportunity that we have had over the past two years to play our part in shaping the future of disability research in Australia. Our role would not have been possible without the deep engagement and collaboration of the disability community, and we are grateful to everyone who shared their ideas and views with us.

The next part of our journey will require even greater collaboration. We look forward to working with all NDRP stakeholders to expand and refine this governance approach and other aspects of the NDRP, as it transitions to a permanent and fully operational organisation with its own independent Board in early 2023. Evidence-based and inclusive disability policy and practice are now within the grasp of the disability community.





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