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Pathway to impact evaluation of the National Disability Research Partnership

Interim evaluation report

August 2026



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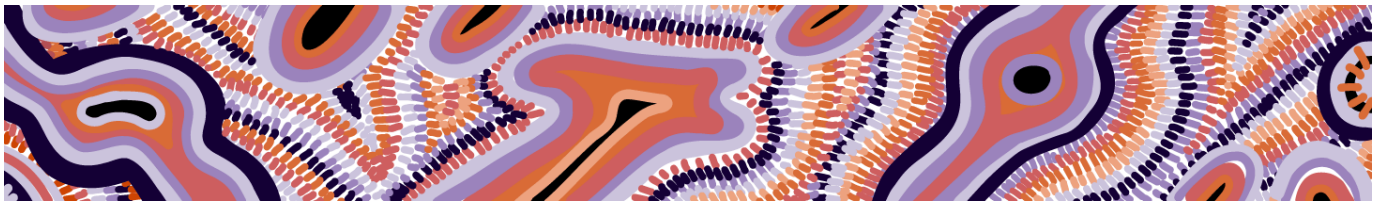
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Report to:

National Disability Research Partnership

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ACIL Allen acknowledges Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the Traditional Custodians of the land and its waters. We pay our respects to Elders, past and present, and to the youth, for the future. We extend this to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples reading this report.



Goomup, by Jarni McGuire

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Glossary

Abbreviations	Definitions
ADS	Australia's Disability Strategy
AERO	Australian Education Research Organisation
ANROWS	Australia's National Research Organisation for Women's Safety
APO	Australian Policy Online
ARC	Australian Research Council
CIE	Centre for Inclusive Employment
CRP	Commissioned Research Project
CYDA	Children and Young People with Disability Australia
DAO	Disability Advocacy Organisations
DRLP	Disability Research Leadership Program
DRO	Disability Representative Organisation
ERG	Evaluation Reference Group
FPDN	First Peoples Disability Network
HREC	Human Research Ethics Committee
LGBTIQA+	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Intersex, Queer (or Questioning), and Asexual
MDI	Melbourne Disability Institute
MRFF	Medical Research Future Fund
NCEIDH	National Centre of Excellence in Intellectual Disability Health
NDIA	National Disability Insurance Agency
NDIS	National Disability Insurance Scheme
NDRP	National Disability Research Partnership
NHMRC	National Health and Medical Research Council
QDRN	Queensland Disability Research Network
RPRC	Rapid Policy Research Collaboration

Executive Summary

The National Disability Research Partnership

The National Disability Research Partnership (the NDRP) was established in recognition of the need for research which is led by and with people with disability in Australia, to support quality research, better policy and practice to improve outcomes and advance the rights of people with disability.

The NDRP facilitates partnerships between people with disability, their families and carers, academics, peak advocacy and consumer groups, governments and services providers to drive collaborative and inclusive research.

The NDRP follows Guiding Principles and has identified 4 strategic focus areas to direct activity:

— Build a sustainable foundation.
— Fund research done by and with people with disability.
— Strengthen disability research capacity.
— Mobilise evidence for action.

Evaluation approach

This evaluation has been commissioned at a relatively early stage in the maturity of the NDRP. The evaluation has taken a 'pathway to impact' approach which evaluates an organisation's progress along a continuum, from the establishment of foundational activities through to the achievement of long-term, systemic change. Progress is understood as cumulative, whereby strong activities lay the groundwork for outputs, outputs enable outcomes, and outcomes contribute to broader impact over time.

The evaluation has examined the progress of the NDRP over its first 2 years of full establishment, from June 2024 to April 2026, to determine if the NDRP is on track to deliver on its vision, including what may need to be strengthened or adjusted to maximise impact. The evaluation has examined both existing and new sources of evidence including:

— NDRP data and documentation
— a desktop review to position the NDRP within the wider policy, strategy and research landscape
— surveys (n=106, n=9 for Easy Read survey)
— focus groups (n=35 participants across 10 discussions).

The evaluation had a relatively short engagement period which may have limited the breadth of stakeholder involvement. Findings through this evaluation should be considered in that context. There has also been limited engagement with First Nations people and with state and territory government representatives. It will be important that subsequent evaluation activities have the time and resources for more fulsome engagement.

Appropriateness

There has been a long history leading to the establishment of the NDRP, a history that has seen systemic and institutional barriers and discrimination undermine the meaningful inclusion of people with disability in research.

Survey results (81%) and focus group discussion reflect a deeply established need for the NDRP to bring voices of people with disability to the fore. There is also a need to address the dearth of relevant research that reflects the lives and needs of people with disability.

The NDRP is an integral part of the policy and strategy landscape required to improve outcomes for people with disability in Australia and has direct linkages between the NDRP's Research Agenda and Australia's Disability Strategy to provide for a program of disability led research that is directly linked to national policy priorities.

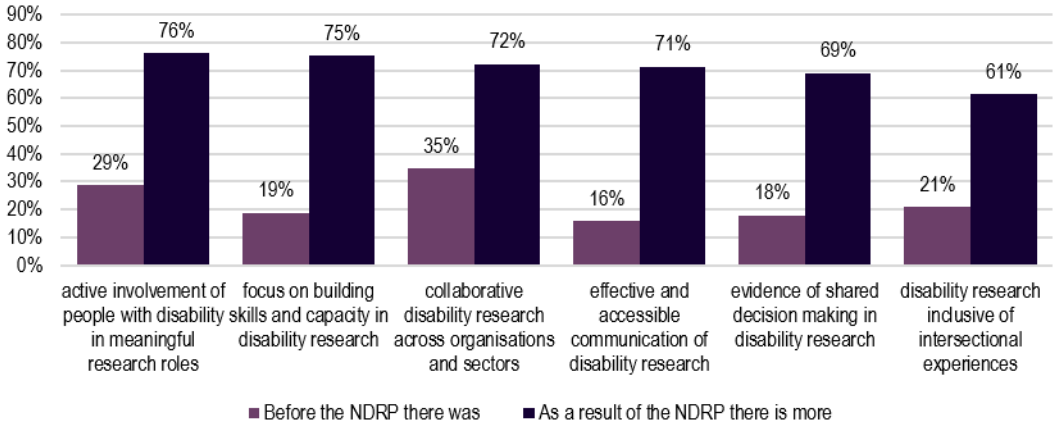
The NDRP is uniquely positioned at the interface of the disability community, researchers and government, as an independent organisation that seeks to foster collaboration across these groups. There is no directly comparable organisation fulfilling all of the NDRP's functions. Although some organisations undertake similar functions across each of research funding, facilitation of partnership and collaboration, knowledge dissemination and translation, there is no other organisation that fulfills all of these functions at a national scale to this scope in the disability sector.

Without the NDRP, the disability research sector would revert to a system that has limited prioritisation of inclusion, lived experience and intersectionality. It would also mean that the progress undertaken to date to establish trusted relationships in the sector and community would be lost, and there would be a lower level of focus on capacity building and power sharing for people with disability. This would ultimately mean that the needs articulated through the Disability Royal Commission and Australia's Disability Strategy would not be addressed, as the research sector would revert to the former status quo.

Effectiveness

Though a small organisation and only 2 years into the first work phase, the NDRP is delivering on what it promised. There is clear evidence of outcomes in securing the foundation of the organisation, delivering disability-led and policy-relevant research, improving research capacity and capability, and making research more accessible, usable, and impactful. Comparison of stakeholder perspectives of the landscape of disability research before the establishment of the NDRP and what has happened as a result of the NDRP simultaneously reinforce the need for the organisation and showcase the significant progress made so far (Figure ES 1).

Figure ES 1 NDRP impacts across areas of need



Source: ACIL Allen

There is robust evidence of the extensive efforts from the NDRP to establish trust among stakeholders and the return of these activities in paving the way for deeper collaboration. This should be recognised as a valuable outcome in its own right when seeking system-level change. The delivery of activities in line with the Guiding Principles has played an essential role in building respect for the NDRP, which is seen to operate with integrity and authenticity in delivering on its vision.

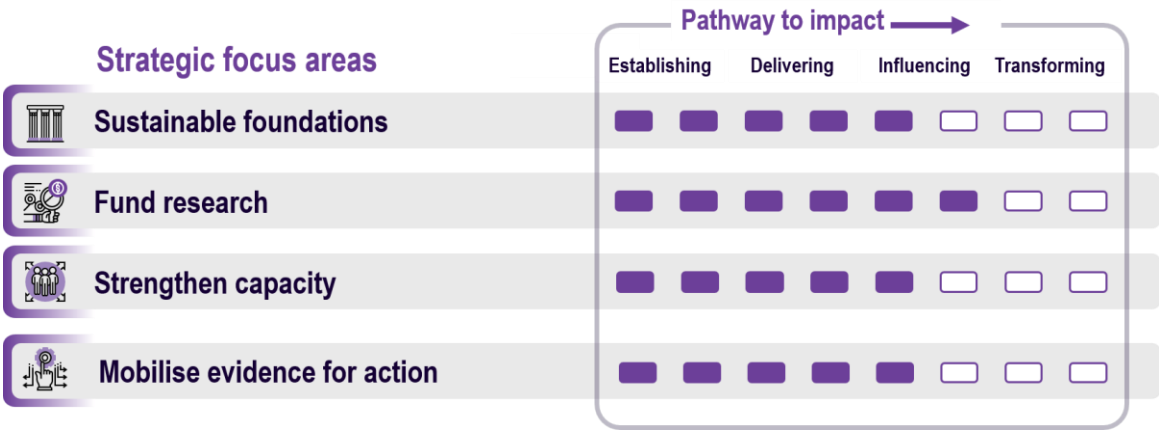
The NDRP has established quality and accessible systems and processes for funding research which is directly linked to outcome areas identified in the organisation's Research Agenda and Australia's Disability Strategy. The volume of applications (93 to Round 1 and 176 to Round 2) demonstrates increasing awareness and engagement. The Commissioned Research has been well implemented as a genuine partnership between researchers and government. The NDRP is seen to be enabling research focused on critical issues that matter most to people with disability, which in turn contributes to trust and respect in the organisation.

The NDRP has established bespoke capability building streams through the Disability Research Leadership Program, a Community of Practice for Round 1 funded teams, and a new micro credential course through a partnership with Griffith University. Stakeholders are receiving opportunities they would not have otherwise had access to, with the DRLP in particular enabling students to undertake higher degree research. The evaluation heard firsthand accounts of how this has been life changing for recipients.

The NDRP has also begun to support improved knowledge translation. The organisation has established a partnership with the APO to deliver a Disability Research Collection, which values all knowledge sources and aims to make research accessible to the community. There are indicators of more effective and accessible communication of disability research. Evidence to Action events have seen over 2,400 registrations and with very high quality ratings for the event.

The achievements of the NDRP are significant and reflect an impressive output given the small footprint of the organisation. The NDRP is driving transformational change across research, policy and the community required to effectively enable inclusion of people with disability to increase empowerment and choice. While these signs are positive, there is work to be done to make inroads to with government stakeholders and broader institutional change with universities, funding bodies and ethics committees. This is to be expected, given the significant time taken to drive the cultural change required and the breadth of priorities the NDRP is currently servicing. The overall effectiveness of the NDRP has been assessed against each of its strategic focus areas (Figure ES 2).

Figure ES 2 NDRP Pathway to impact assessment summary



Source: ACIL Allen

There are strong signs that the NDRP is progressing along a pathway to impact across each of its strategic focus areas, already achieving short term outcomes that are at or above what should be expected at this point in time of organisational maturity. Moving through influencing and transforming remains the longer-term goal, however, this will be challenging to do so in all areas by mid-2027 (the current Government funding commitment) with the current resource model.

Efficiency

Almost all activities committed to in the NDRP's Work Plan have been delivered, are on track, or planned for upcoming implementation. This progress aligns with the objectives for the NDRP articulated by the Australian Government in the Grant Opportunity Guidelines and is supported by the impacts described above across the strategic focus areas.

Evaluating the efficiency of the NDRP is complex and must be considerate of its fundamental aims of working in genuine partnership with people with disability, researchers and government where many inherent costs don't have a tangible budget line. While these challenges are well understood, stakeholders were highly supportive of the approach taken by the NDRP and the scale of outputs and outcomes achieved to date.

The long-term sustainability of the NDRP is dependent on sufficient funding to support the organisation's objectives. The NDRP currently relies on Commonwealth funding to support its operations, and this backbone funding is likely to be required into the future. This aligns with other organisational experiences. Of the $7.6 billion spent on health and medical research in 2023-24, the Australian Government contributed 77.2% and state and territory governments contributed 15.4% with the non-government sector contributing just 7.4%.

While similar organisations also receive most of their funding through governments, additional funding streams have been utilised such as investments, philanthropy or community fundraising. The NDRP is yet to explore these options, though this may be of benefit in the future to support the diversification of revenue streams and the scale of activity required.

It is necessary that the NDRP has the financial resources to support inclusion of people with disability through lived experience engagement, codesign, and inclusion. This will result in long-term efficiencies, through the development of a credible evidence base and resources which can be used in policy and practice and achievement of the aspirations of Australia's Disability Strategy.

Future considerations

This interim evaluation reflects a point in time assessment of the NDRP's pathway to impact. It will be important that there is sufficient time between this evaluation and any subsequent evaluation to allow for the organisation to further advance towards the level of transformational ambition that has been set. As such, it would be prudent to wait at least 2-3 years before another comprehensive evaluation of the organisation.

This interim pathway to impact evaluation has identified a series of future considerations for the NDRP that have an eye to both the longer term goals for the organisation as well as some shorter term improvement opportunities. These are structured below across resource and scale considerations, design considerations and delivery considerations.

Resourcing and scale

Further government funding

There is an established need for the NDRP. There are critical gaps in the research landscape that the NDRP is seeking to counter, most notably the longstanding lack of meaningful involvement of people with disability. However, it takes time to properly mobilise the infrastructure, build relationships and establish trust and reputation among disparate stakeholder groups. Short term, fragmented funding models are problematic and discourage collaborations and the organisation needs longer term surety of funding that recognises the time to build foundations for long-term, transformative change.

While the NDRP has built solid foundations, the organisation has some way to go to expand reach and impact while achieving operational stability. However, there is a huge risk that trust will be eroded and momentum lost if the NDRP does not continue. The dearth of existing research cannot be addressed without investing in the infrastructure required to generate the scale of evidence required to meet policy needs.

Alternate funding streams

For long term sustainability, the NDRP may need to diversify funding streams to reduce the reliance on uncertain government funding – for example, through philanthropy, state and territory governments, and research collaborations. However, it is too early in the organisational maturity to have activated diverse funding streams. It will be essential that any alternate funding streams do not impact the independent nature of the NDRP as this is key to the success of the organisation in fostering collaborations across community, researchers and Government.

The NDRP will need a plan for alternate funding streams, but this will need to be developed on a timeline with government that recognises the efforts required to develop and activate revenue streams. Importantly, this should not be in lieu of government funding – rather alternate funding streams may be additive or supplementary.

Prioritisation of resources

There is a huge weight of stakeholder expectation upon the NDRP. The longer-term outcomes for the organisation are ambitious and reflect a shared vision for systems-level change. While the NDRP is making steady progress towards impacts across each of the strategic focus areas, it is going to be challenging to shift the dial in all areas with the current resource model in the next 12 months.

The NDRP could seek feedback from government about balancing resourcing with the scope and scale of work to fully realise benefits within current resourcing by mid-2027. While significant achievements have been made across short term outcomes, it will be challenging for the organisation to scale up with current resources to reach longer term transformative impacts in less than 12 months across each strategic focus area. However, the complementarity between the strategic focus areas must also be acknowledged and remains a key part of the unique value offering of the NDRP.

Design

Government partnerships

While the NDRP has built diverse and strong relationships across the disability sector, relationships across government are not as strong when compared to community and research stakeholders.

This is to be expected given the complexity of levels of government and government structures, differing priorities across departments, and the relative infancy of the organisation. However, these partnerships are likely to be essential to achieving objectives in driving practice change.

The NDRP may need to consider how to strengthen connections with governments across the country to build trust and credibility to levels seen across researchers and community. This may require further support from the Department of Health, Disability and Ageing (DHDA) to position the NDRP as a leader for government stakeholders to connect with.

Brand awareness

The NDRP is yet to reach notable scale in formalised partnerships outside of funded research agreements. This reflects what has been feasible with time and resources available but will need greater attention in moving toward the NDRP longer-term vision for strengthened collaboration across the sector. Stakeholders have suggested that the NDRP could look to improve brand awareness as it is becoming a more established independent leading organisation.

There may be a need to grow brand awareness and extend formal partnerships, particularly in areas that intersect with disability such as health, ageing and education. Expectations need to be balanced with available resources, given the significant scale of the organisation's existing activity.

Governance

Both the independent process review of Research Round 1 Funding and evaluation of the Commissioned Research Project (CRP) identified challenges with governance and conflicts of interest due to the many roles that people can hold within disability research. This may impact the capacity of the NDRP Research Committee to be fully involved in decision making where members hold conflicts in relation to funding applications.

The role of the Research Committee may not be fully active in the governance of key funding decisions when there are conflicts of interest for members. This may need further consideration as to how the Committee can continue to operate within their Terms of Reference of the Committee in these situations.

Delivery

Research priorities

There are tensions among stakeholder groups on where the NDRP Research Agenda should focus, balancing between foundational evidence gaps and deep dives into intersectional experiences. While many stakeholders felt the NDRP is improving the inclusion of diverse voices, some called for greater inclusion of and attention to this including in relation to people with intellectual and communication disability, LGBTQIA+ people, culturally and linguistically diverse groups, and people from rural and regional areas.

It is challenging, if not impossible, to address all research needs in the current resourcing mix. There may be opportunity over time to give greater prominence to 'mainstreaming' intersectionality within research funding.

Timeliness of research outputs

Government is seeking rapid translation of evidence to inform policy but this needs to be balanced with the time it takes to do quality, inclusive research with proper co-design. The 12-month timeframe to undertake funded research has been reported as a barrier. Evidence examined in this evaluation identified that research can often take up to 4 years from design to translation.

There is a need to balance government expectations for rapid results with the time it takes to complete research. Earlier milestone outputs from research, such as literature reviews or fact sheets, may still be of value to government in the early stages. There is also an opportunity to build capacity within government to fully understand the time required to undertake meaningful co-design.

Research costings

Much of the enabling work of the NDRP is not formally captured as direct research costs and the CRP model has been more resource intense than initially anticipated. As part of future resource planning and as a recognised leader in this area, there is an opportunity to improve how costing is included in both internal NDRP operations and administration but also to provide guidance for others as to how to fully cost meaningful co-design and inclusion.

There is a need to fully capture direct research costs to plan for future resources and sustainability. Over time this could evolve into advice that the NDRP could share more widely to support others to plan sufficient resourcing and time within budgets and plans.

1 Introduction

This chapter provides context for the evaluation, outlines the methodology and summarises data sources.

1.1 Context

Establishment

The National Disability Research Partnership (NDRP) was established in 2020 in recognition of the need for research which is led by and with people with disability in Australia in order to support quality research, policy and practice that improves outcomes and advances the rights of people with disability. The NDRP facilitates partnerships between people with disability, their families and carers, academics, peak advocacy and consumer groups, governments and service providers to drive collaborative and inclusive research. It does this through a diverse program of work spanning research funding, event and network facilitation, training, and dissemination of evidence and knowledge.

The NDRP went through an Establishment Phase from June 2020 to June 2022 (Figure 1.1), with an associated transition phase from August 2022 to March 2023 in which the Melbourne Disability Institute (MDI) and its Working Party consulted with the disability community on design.[1] The advice and feedback of the disability community was consolidated in the Learnings and Recommendations Report released by MDI in March 2023. This report established the NDRP's Guiding Principles, governance structure, research agenda, research disability capacity, and a commitment to inclusive research.

The Australian Government committed $13.6 million for the full establishment of the NDRP over an initial 2-year program of work from June 2024 to June 2026, which was then extended one year until June 2027.

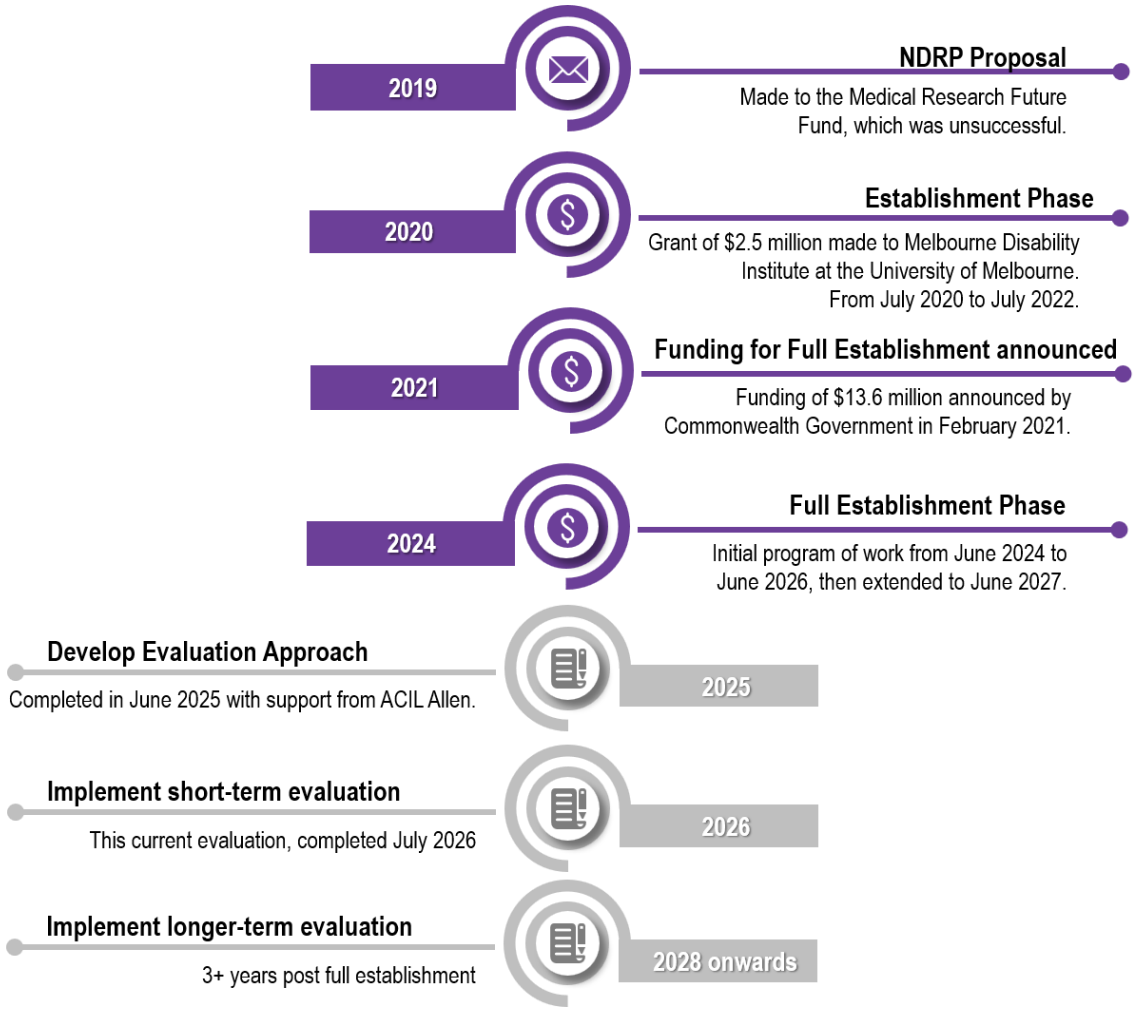
The focus of the first year of operations was outlined in the NDRP's Year 1 Work Plan, which articulated the strategic focus areas to guide activity:

- Build a sustainable foundation.
- Fund research done by and with people with disability.
- Strengthen disability research capacity.
- Mobilise evidence for action.

Initial effort aimed to mobilise the organisation, create the foundational relationships for the NDRP's future success, and commence delivery against these focus areas. A second year workplan was published in mid-2025, outlining the next tranche of work to be undertaken by the NDRP.[2]

[1] NDRP, (n.d.), FAQ, accessed 25/6/26 from https://www.ndrp.org.au/faq
[2] NDRP workplan accessed 25/6/26 from https://www.ndrp.org.au/about/workplan2025-2026

Figure 1.1 Timeline of NDRP establishment



Source: ACIL Allen

Evaluation readiness

In 2025, the NDRP commissioned the development of an evaluation framework and data collection tools for its first 3 years, as well as recommendations for an approach to long-term impact evaluation.

The 2025 evaluation framework and plan were developed through a co-design process with the NDRP and its stakeholders to articulate the desired impacts of the NDRP. Through this process, it was identified that the design of the evaluation framework needed to consider the necessary lead time for impacts to manifest. A 'pathway to impact' approach was embedded which outlined both long-term indicators and corresponding short-term leading indicators. This facilitates distinct but aligned short-term and long-term evaluations.

Within the 'pathway to impact' approach, the short-term evaluation focuses on the short-term impacts of the NDRP and whether they are indicators of the long-term change that the NDRP seeks to create. This provides the foundation for a longer-term summative evaluation of the NDRP.

1.2 This evaluation

Scope

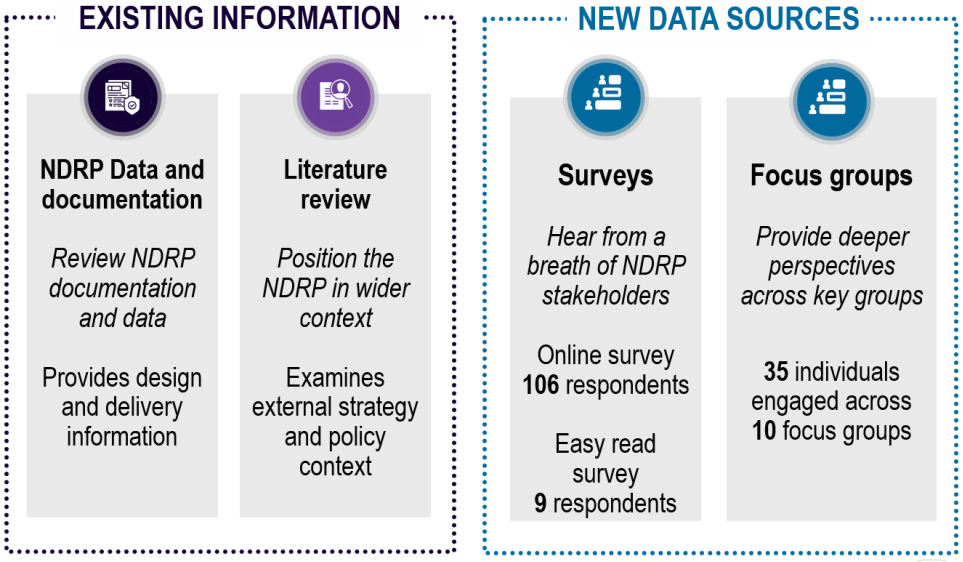
The NDRP engaged ACIL Allen to undertake an interim evaluation of the NDRP, spanning 2024-25 to 2025-26. The overarching objective of this evaluation was to determine whether the NDRP is on track to deliver on its vision, identifying what may need to be strengthened or adjusted to maximise its impact.

In keeping with the NDRP's Guiding Principles, this evaluation has been shaped by an Evaluation Reference Group (ERG) with key stakeholders of the NDRP and members of the disability community. The ERG met in April 2026 to shape the design and focus of the evaluation and again in July 2026 to contribute to the interpretation of findings and future implications for the NDRP. The NDRP Board and executive team have also guided the design and delivery of this interim evaluation. The Evaluation Framework for this evaluation is provided at Appendix A.

Data and information sources

This mixed methods evaluation has drawn on both existing and new data sources as summarised in Figure 1.2. The evaluation has been undertaken in line with the Guiding Principles of the NDRP, providing opportunities for stakeholders to contribute their voices and experiences to the evaluation and recognising the value of lived experience by paying participants for their contributions.

Figure 1.2 Evaluation data sources



Source: ACIL Allen

Limitations

The pathway to impact assessment is based on the NDRP's activity data, consultations, and a survey conducted of the NDRP's stakeholders. The NDRP survey of stakeholders had significant engagement for the short timeframe, with 106 respondents in total.

There was good representation across organisation types and functions, NDRP events, individual roles, states, regionality, and time aware of the NDRP – making the survey findings robust. Demographics are summarised in more detail in Appendix E. A key comparison for the outcomes is by stakeholder group: research, community, and Government. These groups include:

— Research (n=52): Universities and research organisations
— Community (n=48): Disability advocacy organisations (DAOs), disability representative organisations (DROs), community organisations, and peer-led, self-advocacy or volunteer organisations
— Government (n=14): Federal and state government.

Sample sizes listed above do not add to 106 (it adds to 114) as some stakeholders were in more than one group.

This evaluation was completed in a relatively short timeframe, which may have limited stakeholder engagement in consultation activities. Of note, response rates from government stakeholders were lower than that of researchers and DROs. The evaluation also did not include extensive engagement with First Nations people. The evaluation findings must be interpreted with this context in mind.

1.3 Report structure

The evaluation report is structured as follows:

— Chapter 2 examines the justification for the NDRP and the appropriateness of its design.
— Chapter 3 provides an assessment of impact across the NDRP strategic focus areas.
— Chapter 4 explores efficiency, enablers and improvement opportunities.
— Chapter 5 provides conclusions and the associated future implications for the NDRP.

2 Justification and appropriateness

This chapter assesses the need for the NDRP, the appropriateness of its design and the counterfactual should the NDRP not exist.

2.1 Nature of the problem

Systemic and institutional barriers and discrimination in Australia have led to power imbalances and poor co-design and collaboration, which has undermined the inclusion of people with disability in research.

Historically, research has focused on academic and government priorities, rather than the priorities of the disability community. Critical gaps in disability research, collaboration and translation have been identified which reduce the quality and application of disability research into policy and practice. This includes a predominant focus on medical or clinical research rather than a social model of disability, a lack of inclusion of people with lived experience of disability in the research process, and a lack of collaboration and research translation.

The combination of these factors meant that the evidence base for disability research was not fit for purpose prior to the NDRP's establishment.[3] Research was fragmented, inaccessible, lacking a focus on human rights, social equity, and intersectional perspectives, and descriptive rather solution oriented.[4] There was limited research capability and capacity, needing investment to attract, educate, support, and retain researchers.[5]

These challenges were well recognised in the Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People with Disability, discussed further below, but key issues are outlined here.

Dominance of the medical model

Disability research has traditionally utilised a medical model of disability, which narrowly considers disability as a clinical impairment requiring medical intervention. In comparison, a social model of disability recognises that social structures, attitudes and norms are disabling.[6] Many inequities experienced by people with disability are driven by systemic barriers to social determinants of health, and by exclusive social structures, infrastructure and systems which do not accommodate for people with disability.[7]

[3] Llewellyn, G. (2014). Report of Audit of Disability Research in Australia. University of Sydney, Faculty of Health Sciences, Centre for Disability Research and Policy. https://apo.org.au/node/312552#:~:text=The%20Audit%20was%20undertaken%20over,NDS)%20and%20University%20of%20Melbourne.

[4] Llewellyn, G. (2014). Report of Audit of Disability Research in Australia. University of Sydney, Faculty of Health Sciences, Centre for Disability Research and Policy. https://apo.org.au/node/312552#:~:text=The%20Audit%20was%20undertaken%20over,NDS)%20and%20University%20of%20Melbourne.

[5] Llewellyn, G. (2014). Report of Audit of Disability Research in Australia. University of Sydney, Faculty of Health Sciences, Centre for Disability Research and Policy. https://apo.org.au/node/312552#:~:text=The%20Audit%20was%20undertaken%20over,NDS)%20and%20University%20of%20Melbourne.

[6] Australian Department of Social Services. (2021). *Australia's Disability Strategy 2021-2031.* Accessed June 2026: https://www.health.gov.au/our-work/australias-disability-strategy?language=en

[7] Devine, A., Dickinson, H., Bishop, G., Huska, M., Barney, J., Bogumil, R., ... & Aitken, Z. (2026). Addressing disability-related health inequities: a methods paper on enhancing the contribution of public health data science through co-designed mixed methods research. *Journal of Health Equity*, *3*(1), 2633163.

There is a strong understanding and recognition of the importance of utilising a social model of disability, as reflected by its inclusion as key framework in Australia's Disability Strategy.[8] However, this has not translated into practice. When analysing the number of research grants offered through comparative health and disability funds, the majority of grants continue to relate to clinical or medical research.[9]

Low engagement of people with disability

Meaningful inclusion of people with lived experience of disability has been rare. An audit from 2018-2020 found that only 50 of 12,000 publications about disability referenced lived experience as central to their approach.[10] Data from 2024 found that only 1.3% of papers were produced with people with disability.[11] Inclusion of lived experience in research was often limited to the engagement of a person with disability as an advisor on a research project, rather than leading, managing or funding a research project.[12]

There has also been limited inclusion of people who have experienced intersecting inequities in health, such as people with disability who are also from a regional remote area, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, and LGBTIQA+ people.

The lack of inclusion has been driven by attitudes toward people with disability, where people with disability were regarded as vulnerable or at risk of harm through research.[13] Some ethical review processes, although intended to prevent harm through research, have prevented the participation of people with disability in research.[14]

> *"Ethics requirements don't include us, which creates barriers. A lot of the time people with disability haven't been able to be part of research." (DRO representative)*

Barriers to development of research skills have also meant that people with disability may not have had opportunities to build their research capacities or experience.[15] Providing opportunities for people with disability to build their research capacities is critical, alongside appropriate remuneration of people with lived experience for their participation and involvement in research processes.[16]

Without involvement of the people who are affected by the research, there is a risk that research is undertaken in a paternalistic way, exacerbating existing inequities.[17] It is critical that disability research incorporates lived experience in design, methods and reporting in order to meaningfully address challenges faced by people with disability.[18]

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[8] Australian Department of Social Services (2024). *Australia's Disability Strategy 2021-2031 – 2024 Update: Building a more inclusive Australia.* Accessed June 2026: https://www.disabilitygateway.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/2025-01/5831-dss3513-ads-strategy-2021.pdf.

[9] Smith-Merry, J., Gallego, G., Yen, I., Imms, C., O'Donovan, M. A., & Dew, A. (2022). Mapping disability research in Australia 2018-2020.

[10] Smith-Merry, J., Gallego, G., Yen, I., Imms, C., O'Donovan, M. A., & Dew, A. (2022). Mapping disability research in Australia 2018-2020.

[11] Smith-Merry, J., Darcy, S., Dew, A., Hemsley, B., Imms, C., O'Donovan, M. A., ... & Ellem, K. (2025). Who funds published disability research in Australia?. *Journal of Disability Policy Studies*, *36*(1), 52-63.

[12] National Centre of Excellence in Intellectual Disability Health. (2026). What's important to us in health research? Establishing national health research priorities through a co-design process. Accessed June 2026:

[13] Kelly, M., Gallego, G., Anderson, S., Trollor, J., & O'Donovan, M. A. (2026). A Narrative Review of Inclusive Research Practices. *Journal of Policy and Practice in Intellectual Disabilities*, *23*(2), e70057.

[14] Buick, J., West, R. and Dickinson, H. (2022). *Building effective system-wide disability research capacity in Australia – What does it look like and how do we get there?* University of New South Wales (UNSW) Canberra.

[15] Buick, J., West, R. and Dickinson, H. (2022).

[16] Bogumil, R., Dimov, S., Bright, T., M. Bishop, G., & Aitken, Z. (2026).

[17] Devine, A., Dickinson, H., Bishop, G., Huska, M., Barney, J., Bogumil, R. & Aitken, Z. (2026). Addressing disability-related health inequities: a methods paper on enhancing the contribution of public health data science through co-designed mixed methods research. *Journal of Health Equity*, *3*(1), 2633163.

[18] Buick, J., West, R. and Dickinson, H. (2022). *Building effective system-wide disability research capacity in Australia – What does it look like and how do we get there?* University of New South Wales (UNSW) Canberra.

Limited focus on knowledge translation

Translating research into practice has been challenging given the different needs of research and policy stakeholders, and the misalignment between research and policy agendas.[19] Researchers, policy makers and the disability community must have trusting relationships to effectively translate knowledge.[20] However, the historical disempowerment and lack of inclusion of people with disabilities means trusted relationships were not established between the disability community, researchers and governments.

There has also been low effort in ensuring that evidence is accessible, communicated and shared, so that it can drive change. There has historically been limited consolidation of disability research, such as through a repository or database.[21] Efforts have not focused on communicating research findings in accessible ways and in various formats, such as plain language summaries and Easy Read.[22] Accessible research translation takes additional time and resourcing that has not always been available as a result of funding arrangements.

Disconnected partnerships and information sharing

Facilitation of collaboration and partnerships between researchers, the disability sector and government is critical to ensuring meaningful inclusion of lived experience perspectives, and to support translation of research into practice and policy.[23] The disability sector is incredibly broad and has a range of stakeholders across academia, advocacy and DROs, service providers and government. There have been few formalised mechanisms for networking and information sharing.[24] Although collaboration occurred across the disability sector, this was largely variable and reliant on existing relationships rather than formal structures.

2.2 Alignment with strategic and policy objectives

Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People with Disability (2019-2023)

The Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People with Disability (the Royal Commission) articulated the need for improved disability research and consistent data collection, noting the challenges in gathering reliable and useful data and research to inform the Royal Commission.[25]

The Royal Commission's Final Report emphasised the importance of involvement of people with lived experience of disability in design, delivery, research and leadership of services and systems which involve people with disability. This included through co-design and co-production of services and research and representation of people with disability in the delivery, leadership and governance of services and systems.[26]

These factors are critical in addressing ableism, segregation and negative attitudes toward people with disability, and to better promote belonging, pride and connection for people with disability in Australia.

[19] Centre for Health in All Policies. *Research to Policy Translation: Strategies.*
[20] Centre for Health in All Policies. *Research to Policy Translation: Strategies.*
[21] Buick, J., West, R. and Dickinson, H. (2022).
[22] Buick, J., West, R. and Dickinson, H. (2022).
[23] Including Disability Representative Organisations, service providers, and other stakeholder groups representing people with disability.
[24] Buick, J., West, R. and Dickinson, H. (2022).
[25] Commonwealth of Australia. (2023). *Final report - Royal Commission into the Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People with Disability*.
[26] Ibid.

The Royal Commission stated that there was a lack of representation of people with disability in positions of leadership, decision-making or authority, reducing the ability for meaningful system improvement.

The NDRP was specifically identified within the Royal Commission as the mechanism to achieve greater coordination and build evidence for successful policy and research in Australia. The Royal Commission called for continued funding of the NDRP to achieve this. The subsequent response by the Australian Government positions the NDRP to support research commissioned directly to it by governments and other organisations, however, acknowledges that the organisation will not be the only vehicle for new research.[27]

The NDRP is firmly established as addressing core needs articulated by the Royal Commission, while also recognising that other vehicles for research will continue to be required.

Australia's Disability Strategy 2021-2031

Australia's Disability Strategy 2021-2031 is the national disability policy framework to improve the lives of people with disability in Australia.[28] It is based on the social model of disability, recognising that societal factors such as attitudes, practices and structures are disabling. It aims to remove barriers to full participation and inclusion in society for people with disability.

Australia's Disability Strategy identified the centrality of building an evidence base to supporting reform and included a commitment to the development of disability research and its translation into policy. It identified that the NDRP would be instrumental in building this evidence base through a collaborative research program through partnerships to conduct research and promote the use of evidence-informed policy and practice.

The NDRP is an integral component of Australia's Disability Strategy, and the NDRP Research Agenda is a key enabler of its implementation.

National Health and Medical Research Strategy

The National Health and Medical Research Strategy 2026-2036 (the Research Strategy) outlines the Australian Government's commitment to strengthen health and medical research and to overcome systemic challenges.[29] The Research Strategy acknowledges the gaps in research for rare diseases, mental ill health, ageing and chronic conditions, as well as health inequality for its priority populations.

The Strategy outlines systemic challenges in research funding, noting limited interaction and coordination between funding entities, fragmentation and short-term funding, and a lack of balancing across the sector. The Strategy will establish an annual National Health and Medical Research Investment statement, with the intention of setting priorities for investment decisions across funders.

People with disability are named as a priority population in the Research Strategy, as well as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, culturally and linguistically diverse people, LGBTIQA+ people, people with mental health conditions, people in low socio-economic groups and people living in regional, rural and remote areas.

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[27] Australian Government Response to the Disability Royal Commission 2024 https://www.health.gov.au/sites/default/files/2025-07/australian-government-response-to-the-disability-royal-commission.pdf

[28] Australian Department of Social Services. (2021). *Australia's Disability Strategy 2021-2031.* Accessed June 2026: https://www.health.gov.au/our-work/australias-disability-strategy?language=en

[29] Australian Department of Health, Disability and Ageing. (2026). *National Health and Medical Research Strategy 2026-2036.* Accessed June 2026: https://www.health.gov.au/resources/publications/national-health-and-medical-research-strategy-2026-2036-0?language=en.

Of relevance to the NDRP, the Research Strategy outlines the importance of collaborative platforms, capacity and capability building, and timely translation and implementation of research into health and systems policy and practice.[30] The NDRP's focus on people with disability as well as recognising intersectionality is aligned with the Research Strategy's priority populations.

Australian Universities Accord 2023

The Australian Universities Accord (the Accord) sets out a commitment from the Australian government to improve the quality, affordability, accessibility and sustainability of higher education, which has a specific focus on equity.[31] This includes increasing participation and attainment in higher education among groups who have historically been under-represented in higher education, including people with disability.

The Accord recommended participation targets for these cohorts to increase representation in higher education by 2050, however this reflects only a maintenance target for students with disability. It also recommended a 'whole of student' focus, to support learning and teaching, affordable student housing, assistance with employment and income support, to reduce barriers to participation in higher education.[32]

The NDRP supports the delivery of the Accord through its role in capacity building of people with disability in research and higher education. The NDRP's Disability Research Leadership Program (DRLP) is a core example, where it offers mentoring and development for students. In addition to offering a disability-inclusive approach with appropriate accessibility supports, the DRLP removes barriers to participation through a stipend. While the onus is on universities to better support student participation through removing barriers and support inclusion, the NDRP is addressing gaps, albeit relative to its scale and available resources.

2.3 Alignment with stakeholder needs

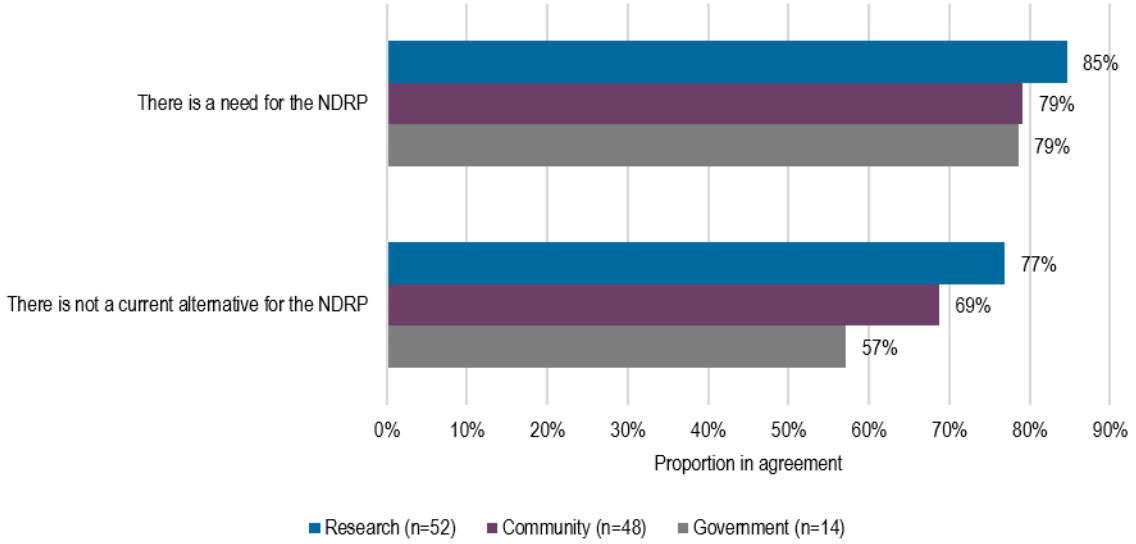
There was a consensus among stakeholders that the NDRP is needed (81%, see Figure 2.1). Most stakeholders (72%) agreed that there is no current alternative for the NDRP. While responses were consistently high, there was some variation between stakeholder groups on both need and alternatives. Research organisations were consistently more positive in their reflections than DROs and government. This may be because researchers have been more closely involved with the work of the NDRP through their direct role in grant applications, capacity building or research projects.

[30] Australian Department of Health, Disability and Ageing. (2026). *National Health and Medical Research Strategy 2026-2036.* Accessed June 2026: https://www.health.gov.au/resources/publications/national-health-and-medical-research-strategy-2026-2036-0?language=en.

[31] Australian Department of Education. (2024). *Australian Universities Accord.* Accessed June 2026: https://www.education.gov.au/australian-universities-accord/resources/final-report.

[32] Australian Department of Education. (2024). *Australian Universities Accord.* Accessed June 2026: https://www.education.gov.au/australian-universities-accord/resources/final-report.

Figure 2.1 Stakeholder agreement that there is a need for the NDRP



Source: NDRP Survey, analysis by ACIL Allen

Stakeholder feedback on the nature of need broadly aligns with the problems identified in section 2.1, indicating that the original drivers for the NDRP continue to exist and reinforcing the importance of the organisation's role.

Stakeholders consistently reported that there has been a lack of disability research driven by the priorities of the community which has meant the needs of people with disability were not adequately understood or assessed. The focus on medical models has reduced the extent to which meaningful interventions and solutions could be developed or implemented in a way that was tailored to the needs of the disability community.

> *"The research landscape had a lot of medical and health funding; the deficit model is hard to escape when you're working in that space. Having applied for Australian Research Council grants, I would say that the priorities were quite unfriendly to disability communities. There was skewed funding. That was problematic, I remember getting any kind of disability-specific research was quite complicated. It wasn't built into structures." (DRO representative)*

> *"It is vital that there is a source of funding for disability research that is disability owned and led, and which can take a rights-based rather than a health-based framing. Additionally, many of the other sources of research funding in Australia are limited by priorities which are frequently ableist or even eugenicist. It is vital in this context that a rights-based research body is leading disability research in Australia." (Survey respondent)*

The NDRP is seen to address a gap in leading the development of an established and credible evidence base for disability policy. The NDRP's translation and evidence promotion functions were seen as particularly important given the long disconnect between policy and research, although stakeholders acknowledged that this is likely one of the most difficult and long-term challenges for the NDRP. Government stakeholders reported a need for research which is practical and useful for them to translate into policy and the need to see links between research funded by the NDRP and Australia's Disability Strategy Outcome Areas.

> *"There was a missing piece around disability research, it had been underfunded historically. The purpose is to strengthen it, give it its own identity, and its own ability to have disability-led research."*

These results show that the NDRP is in a challenging position in that it must carefully balance meeting the needs of the disability and research communities and policy makers. The Royal Commission and subsequent commitments have also meant that there is a significant weight of expectation on the NDRP to resolve the well-recognised systemic issues.

2.4 Role of the NDRP in addressing gaps

The NDRP has a critical role in addressing the gaps in the disability research sector, and fulfilling commitments outlined in Australia's Disability Strategy. The NDRP's Strategic Plan and Guiding Principles align with the intent of meeting the needs described earlier and recommendations from key policy documents.

The NDRP Research Agenda is a key mechanism through which the dominance of the medical model can be challenged. It was co-developed with people with disability to allow lived experience to inform the research priorities for the first 10 years of its funding program.[33] This demonstrates the NDRP's commitment to genuine co-design in its design of research priorities. The Research Agenda also reflects policy commitments, as each research area and topic is explicitly linked to Australia's Disability Strategy.

The NDRP prioritises engagement of people with disability, working against historical barriers to inclusion. The NDRP's Strategic Plan 2024-2029 specifically states that the NDRP is led and informed by people with disability across all of its work.[34] This is also evident through the NDRP Board and leadership, which includes people with lived experience of disability. Fifty per cent of board members have publicly shared that they are a person with lived experience of disability on the NDRP website.[35] This emphasises how central people with disability have been in the strategic direction of the NDRP.

The NDRP is actively committed to building research capability and capacity, as reflected in the Guiding Principles.[36] Through its engagement and targeted activities, the NDRP provides a path for both direct and indirect capability building. This aligns with the need for greater representation of people with disability in research teams and leadership.

Mobilising evidence to action is one the NDRP's key focus areas, as well as sharing research findings.[37] This aligns with gaps identified in the dissemination of research to translate findings into policy and practice. An example of the NDRP's role in research dissemination is through its collaboration with the Australian Policy Outline (APO), to share evidence and research on disability through a dedicated Disability Research Collection. This meets the need for a central repository of evidence and research which policy and other stakeholders can readily access.

Comparison of the NDRP's approach to alternatives

The NDRP is unique as a disability-led organisation. It has a role as a research funder and a facilitator of partnerships and collaboration, knowledge mobilisation and evidence translation. While there are no direct comparators, there are other bodies who fill some of these discrete functions.

[33] National Disability Research Partnership. (2024). *NDRP Research Agenda.* Accessed June 2026: https://apo.org.au/node/326801.
[34] National Disability Research Partnership. (2024). *Strategic Plan.* Accessed June 2026: https://www.ndrp.org.au/about/strategic-plan.
[35] NDRP. *Board of Directors.* Accessed June 2026: https://www.ndrp.org.au/about/our-people/board-of-directors.
[36] National Disability Research Partnership. *Guiding Principles.* Accessed June 2026: https://www.ndrp.org.au/principles.
[37] National Disability Research Partnership. (2024). *Strategic Plan.* Accessed June 2026: https://www.ndrp.org.au/about/strategic-plan.

Disability-led organisations and representative bodies

Disability-led organisations and representative bodies represent people with lived experience of disability. These organisations are driven by the needs, interests and rights of people with disability, and aim to ensure the voice of people with disability is reflected in policy making, service delivery, and community life. There are many disability-led organisations in Australia representing different groups of people and types of disability across Australia. The Commonwealth's DRO Program provides funding for 11 DROs, though there are additional organisations that represent people with disability.[38] For example, the First Peoples Disability Network (FPDN) represents Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people with disability, and Children and Young People with Disability Australia (CYDA) represents children and young people with disability.[39]

The core function of disability-led organisations is to communicate the perspectives of people with disability through advocacy work and public communications. This aims to increase awareness of the experiences and needs of people with disability to inform policy and practice. Activities commonly include submissions to government, published position statements, public communications campaigns, and sharing of information and resources. As an example, the FPDN publishes its current policy priorities and position on relevant legislation or policy reforms.[40]

Many organisations also provide direct resources, information or facilitation of networks for people with disability, families and carers. For example, Inclusion Australia provides information for people with disability, families, carers and health professionals on policy, such as information on changes to the National Disability Insurance Scheme(NDIS) Legislation.[41] Queensland Disability Network also runs information sessions and online inclusion forums, which bring together people with disability, families, allies, local businesses and organisations to discuss solutions and actions to promote inclusion for people with disability in Queensland.[42]

Disability-led organisations have a key role in individual and organisation capability uplift for supporting or engaging with people with disability. FPDN and CYDA both provide training programs and resources in areas such as workplace inclusion and disability-rights practice.[43]

There is little overlap between the activities of other disability-led organisations and the NDRP. Although the NDRP aims to facilitate translation of research into practice and policy, to date it has not done so through submissions or position statements. NDRP has developed resources for the disability community, though these focus more on the research process itself, such as providing resources on co-design and co-production. While the disability-led organisations and the NDRP both value and aim to promote the voice of people with lived experience in their work, they have different roles and do not duplicate offerings.

Research funders

There are comparative research funders, such as the National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) and the Medical Research Future Fund (MRFF) which are focused on health and medical research and the Australian Research Council (ARC) which funds research and innovation that impacts economic, social, environmental, and cultural matters.

[38] Australian Department of Health, Disability and Ageing. *Disability Representative Organisations Program.* Accessed June 2026: https://www.health.gov.au/our-work/disability-representative-organisations-program?language=en

[39] First Peoples Disability Network. *About Us.* Accessed June 2026: https://fpdn.org.au/about-us/; Children and Young People with Disability Australia. *About.* Accessed June 2026: https://cyda.org.au/about/.

[40] First Peoples Disability Network. *Policy & Research*. Accessed June 2026: https://fpdn.org.au/our-work/policy-research/

[41] Inclusion Australia. *Resources.* Accessed June 2026: https://www.inclusionaustralia.org.au/resources/

[42] Queenslanders with Disability Network. *Events.* Accessed June 2026https://qdn.org.au/events/

[43] Children and Young People with Disability Australia. *Training.* Accessed June 2026: https://cyda.org.au/training/; First Peoples Disability Network. *Training.* Accessed June 2026: https://fpdn.org.au/our-work/training/.

These organisations fund disability research as a sub-category and not a core focus. An audit showed that 69.5% of intellectual disability research from 2019-2024 was funded by the NHMRC, and 26.5% of intellectual disability research was funded by the ARC.[44]

Most disability research funded through the NHMRC has been within a medical or clinical lens. Within NHMRC and ARC disability funding, 84% was provided for research on general health or congenital disorders, with less research on mental health, oral health, prevention or staying healthy.[45] Among the NHMRC's research priorities, disability may be included as part of 'multiple long-term conditions' or where research investigates the intersection between mental health and disability. In 2021, the NHMRC had a Targeted Call for Research on *Improving the health of people with intellectual disability,* which directly prioritised disability. However, this was a time-limited opportunity and further calls have not been made.

In addition to funding research, the NHMRC publishes national guidelines which inform research practice and policy. The NHMRC's National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research is the standard guideline which many Human Research Ethics Committees (HRECs) require compliance with, and policy makers may reference the NHMRC's guidelines for public health, clinical practice, environmental health, child health and development.[46] The NHMRC has a strong level of national awareness and influence in this regard, noting that they were established over 80 years prior to the NDRP.

Both the NHMRC and ARC have stated that partnerships, collaboration and capacity building are important in their roles. To support partnerships and collaboration between the research sector, governments, and organisations, the ARC funds targeted schemes such as projects, fellowships, research hubs and Centres of Excellence.[47] The NHMRC has also identified that developing partnerships and building capability and capacity are central in their research translation strategies.[48]

The NDRP's Research Agenda concentrates on the experiences and priorities of people with disability more broadly[49], reflecting a broader mandate than other organisations and challenges the dominance of the medical and clinical research as reflected through the NHMRC and MRFF. For both the NHMRC and MRFF, funding disability-specific research, including the broader, individual, structural and systemic barriers people with disability face, is not within their mandate or scope.

By comparison to other research funders, the NDRP has an explicit purpose to fund and facilitate collaborative and inclusive disability research.[50] The NDRP has a stronger focus on genuine co-design and inclusion of people with disabilities in its approach. For example, the NHMRC refers to people as 'consumers' in health and medical research whereas NDRP consistently refers to 'people with lived experience'. This is evidenced through the NDRP's criteria for research funding and its co-design resources.

The NDRP also has a deeper role in also prioritising partnership and collaboration with people with lived experience of with disability.[51] The NDRP's Evidence to Action events and Communities of Practice also bring different researchers together more broadly, beyond researchers who work together in a project team.

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[44] National Centre of Excellence in Intellectual Disability Health. (2026). *An Audit of Intellectual Disability Health Research Funding in Australia*. Accessed June 2026: https://nceidh.org.au/sites/default/files/2026-05/An%20Audit%20of%20Intellectual%20Disability%20Health%20Research%20Funding%20in%20Australia.pdf.

[45] National Centre of Excellence in Intellectual Disability Health. (2026). *An Audit of Intellectual Disability Health Research Funding in Australia*. Accessed June 2026: https://nceidh.org.au/sites/default/files/2026-05/An%20Audit%20of%20Intellectual%20Disability%20Health%20Research%20Funding%20in%20Australia.pdf.

[46] National Health and Medical Research Council. *Research policy.* Accessed June 2026: https://www.nhmrc.gov.au/research-policy; National Health and Medical Research Council. *Health advice*. Accessed June 2026: https://www.nhmrc.gov.au/health-advice.

[47] Australian Research Council. *Working with partners.* Accessed June 2026: https://www.arc.gov.au/working-partners.

[48] National Health and Medical Research Council. (2022). *NHMRC Research Translation Strategy 2022–2025*

[49] National Disability Research Partnership. (2024). *NDRP Research Agenda.* Accessed June 2026: https://apo.org.au/node/326801.

[50] National Disability Research Partnership. (2024). *Strategic Plan.* Accessed June 2026: https://www.ndrp.org.au/about/strategic-plan.

[51] National Disability Research Partnership. (2024). *Strategic Plan.* Accessed June 2026: https://www.ndrp.org.au/about/strategic-plan.

Through consultation, researchers compared their experience in applying for funding through the NHMRC or ARC, and noted those organisations had less clarity in their aims or research funding or assessment of criteria compared to the NDRP. The NDRP has a fundamental expectation of genuine co-design that is not similarly privileged through the NHMRC or its Medical Research Future Fund (MRFF).

> *"MRFF or NHMRC might say there's a need to demonstrate impact, involve consumers. NDRP is different, not just involving consumers, but also requiring co-design with people with lived experience, disability led research." (DRO representative)*

> *"There is really minuscule funding to disability, research really has a medical focus and not much more. I can't think of anyone else that would be driving this broader research for people with disability, by people with disability. The NDRP is driving meaningful research, meeting the needs of people with disability. Their advocacy and upskilling role here is unique." (Government stakeholder)*

Research centres and institutes

Research centres and institutes are either distinct organisations or a collaboration across organisations which aim to disseminate or promote research within a specified subject or priority area. There are multiple institutes in the disability field, with key examples including the National Centre of Excellence in Intellectual Disability Health (NCEIDH), the Centre for Inclusive Employment (CIE), and the Queensland Disability Research Network (QDRN). [52]

These organisations share similarities with the NDRP in some functions such as building evidence, research and evidence, facilitating networks and collaboration, and translating research into practice and policy.

Although research centres and institutes such as the NCEIDH, CIE and QDRN are all positioned within the disability field, the scope of their work is more defined to a particular type of disability, an area of disability support or a location. For instance, the NCEIDH is focused on intellectual disability, the CIE is focussed on promoting employment inclusion for people with disability, and the QDRN is Queensland-based.[53]

Research centres and institutes have a core focus on leading the development and promotion of evidence and research. This may include directly leading research or publishing reports, developing position statements, undertaking advocacy work to promote priority issues, or developing targeted resources. The NCEIDH has published audits and research reports, and has also developed resources and information for people with intellectual disability, families, carers and health and disability professionals.[54] The CIE provides information on evidence-based practice approaches for disability employment services, such as information on strengths-based and person-centred approaches, trauma informed approaches, and cultural responsiveness.[55] The QDRN collaborates and undertakes research within its Queensland Disability Research Agenda, with the aim of contributing to the APO Disability Collection funded by NDRP.[56]

Some research centres and institutes aim to build disability research capacity. For instance, the QDRN states its aims to build capacity of early career researchers, and of encouraging people with disability to become citizen researchers through the NDRP-funded Citizen Research Essentials course.

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[52] National Centre of Excellence in Intellectual Disability Health. *About the Centre.* Accessed June 2026: https://nceidh.org.au/about/about-the-centre; Centre for Inclusive Employment. (2025). *About the Centre for Inclusive Employment.* Accessed June 2026: https://www.centreforinclusiveemployment.au/about; Queensland Disability Research Network. *About us.* Accessed June 2026: https://inclusivefutures.griffith.edu.au/hub-page/queensland-disability-research-network.

[53] National Centre of Excellence in Intellectual Disability Health. *About the Centre.* Accessed June 2026: https://nceidh.org.au/about/about-the-centre; Centre for Inclusive Employment. (2025). *About the Centre for Inclusive Employment.* Accessed June 2026: https://www.centreforinclusiveemployment.au/about; Queensland Disability Research Network. *About us.* Accessed June 2026: https://inclusivefutures.griffith.edu.au/hub-page/queensland-disability-research-network.

[54] National Centre of Excellence in Intellectual Disability Health. *What we do.* Accessed June 2026: https://nceidh.org.au/our-work/what-we-do

[55] Centre for Inclusive Employment. *Practice Approaches.* Accessed June 2026: https://www.centreforinclusiveemployment.au/practice-approaches

[56] https://inclusivefutures.griffith.edu.au/qdrn-objectives

Research centres or institutes and the NDRP share a focus on co-design and lived experience. For instance, the NCEIDH has a co-governance and co-leadership model between people with disability, consortium leads and an independent council, and co-design is one of the QDRN's operating principles.[57] As outlined earlier, lived experience and co-design are also central to the NDRP's approach.

However, a core point of difference between research institutes and the NDRP is that the NDRP is an independent organisation with a governance and operating model that ensures people with disability are in leadership roles. The NCEIDH and CIE are both consortiums of organisations including universities, research bodies, advocacy organisations, and peak bodies representing people with disability, and QDRN is a cross-sector initiative within a university.[58] The NDRP is unique in this regard. The benefit of this independence is that the NDRP can work across the different groups, to bridge the gaps in understanding between research, community and policy.

The NDRP also has a much broader remit, covering research across all types of disability, multiple research topics, and at a national level. For instance, Australia's Disability Strategy has set up an expectation that the NDRP leads the development of research across 7 focus areas, with employment and financial security only being one of these, compared to it being the sole focus for CIE.

Knowledge mobilisation and evidence translation organisations

Knowledge mobilisation and evidence translation organisations aim to influence policy and practice through dissemination of research or advisory roles. There is no specific organisation with this remit at a national level in the disability sector, but comparable organisations in other sectors include Australia's National Research Organisation for Women's Safety (ANROWS) in the domestic, family and sexual violence sector, Australian Education Research Organisation (AERO) in education, the Black Dog Institute in mental health, and the Sax Institute in mental health and wellbeing.[59]

A common function of these organisations is sharing information in ways that are accessible and practical for end-users. For example, ANROWS offers an evidence portal through its website, which identifies impact evaluation and systematic reviews.[60] Black Dog Institute and AERO provide links to research across their websites, categorised according to the type of mental health condition or learning outcome, intervention setting, and treatment, care or engagement models.[61] The Sax Institute has a resource hub with links to research, and publishes research in the Public Health Research & Practice journal.[62]

[57] National Centre of Excellence in Intellectual Disability Health. *About the Centre.* Accessed June 2026: https://nceidh.org.au/about/about-the-centre; National Centre of Excellence in Intellectual Disability Health. (2025). *Centre Strategy 2025-2028.* Accessed June 2026: https://nceidh.org.au/about/strategy; Queensland Disability Research Network. *QDRN Operating Principles.* Accessed June 2026: https://inclusivefutures.griffith.edu.au/qdrn-operating-principles.

[58] National Centre of Excellence in Intellectual Disability Health. *About the Centre.* Accessed June 2026: https://nceidh.org.au/about/about-the-centre; Centre for Inclusive Employment. (2025). About the Centre for Inclusive Employment. Accessed June 2026: https://www.centreforinclusiveemployment.au/about; Queensland Disability Research Network. *About us.* Accessed June 2026: https://inclusivefutures.griffith.edu.au/hub-page/queensland-disability-research-network.

[59] Australia's National Research Organisation for Women's Safety. *Who we are.* Accessed June 2026: https://www.anrows.org.au/about/; Australian Education Research Organisation. *About us.* Accessed June 2026: https://www.edresearch.edu.au/about-us; Black Dog Institute. *About.* Accessed June 2026: https://www.blackdoginstitute.org.au/about/; Sax Institute. *Who we are and what we do.* Accessed June 2026: https://www.saxinstitute.org.au/about-us/

[60] Australia's National Research Organisation for Women's Safety. *The ANROWS Evidence Portal.* Accessed June 2026: https://www.anrows.org.au/research-program/evidence-portal/.

[61] Black Dog Institute. Accessed June 2026: https://www.blackdoginstitute.org.au/; Australian Education Research Organisation. Accessed June 2026: https://www.edresearch.edu.au/.

[62] Sax Institute. *Resource Hub.* Accessed June 2026: https://www.saxinstitute.org.au/resource-hub/.

These organisations often translate evidence through the facilitation of events, training and networks, which are similar in principle to the NDRP's Evidence to Action Series. ANROWS facilitates events which support dissemination as well as collaboration, such as public lectures, workshops and research launches.[63]

The Sax Institute runs events and training sessions on research methodologies, evaluation, critical appraisal, and building successful partnerships, which contribute to building research capacity in the health sector.[64] The event and training-based sessions are a useful mechanism to engage people in research while providing capacity building for individuals or organisations.

Knowledge and mobilisation organisations also act in strategic advisory role. This may occur through a 'push' mechanism where researchers distribute evidence, papers, submissions or policy briefs, 'pull' strategies where policy makers commission research that aligns with the policy agenda, or 'exchange' strategies where researchers and policy makers have established partnerships, networks and relationships to exchange knowledge.[65] AERO, Black Dog Institute and ANROWS all provide submissions to government on key policy developments as a key mechanism to contribute their organisational position on an issue.[66] Additionally, ANROWS and AERO have established relationships with government to support their role in independent advisory capacities.

The NDRP is both newer and smaller than these organisations and is still in the early stages of mobilising these functions in the early days of its implementation. There may be lessons learned regarding both effective knowledge translation and advisory functions for the NDRP, while noting both the scale and stage of the organisation.

2.5 Counterfactual

There is currently no other national organisation in Australia which works at the intersection of government, research and disability community to drive improved disability research across streams of funding, building capability and knowledge translation.

Although disability-led organisations, research funders, research centres, and knowledge mobilisation organisations each undertake some functions the NDRP does, there is no independent organisation that undertakes all of these functions simultaneously in the disability sector.

The analysis above shows that without the NDRP, there would be less targeted funding for disability research, which prioritises inclusion, lived experience and intersectionality. This is reflected in the evidence on the low amount of disability funding through other funding bodies such as the NHMRC and ARC. Further, only 30% of respondents agreed that there was active involvement of people with disability in meaningful research roles before the NDRP (see Figure 2.2).

Through consultations, stakeholders reported that alternatives such as research centres were reported to have more focus on delivering other priorities, so the disability-led aspect was often secondary. Additionally, survey data indicates there was less focus on including intersectional perspectives such as First Nations, diverse cultural backgrounds, rural and remote communities, and LGBTIQA+.

[63] Australia's National Research Organisation for Women's Safety. *Knowledge translation & exchange.* Accessed June 2026: https://www.anrows.org.au/events/.

[64] Sax Institute. *Past events.* Accessed June 2026: https://www.saxinstitute.org.au/past-events/.

[65] Centre for Health in All Policies. *Research to Policy Translation: Strategies.*

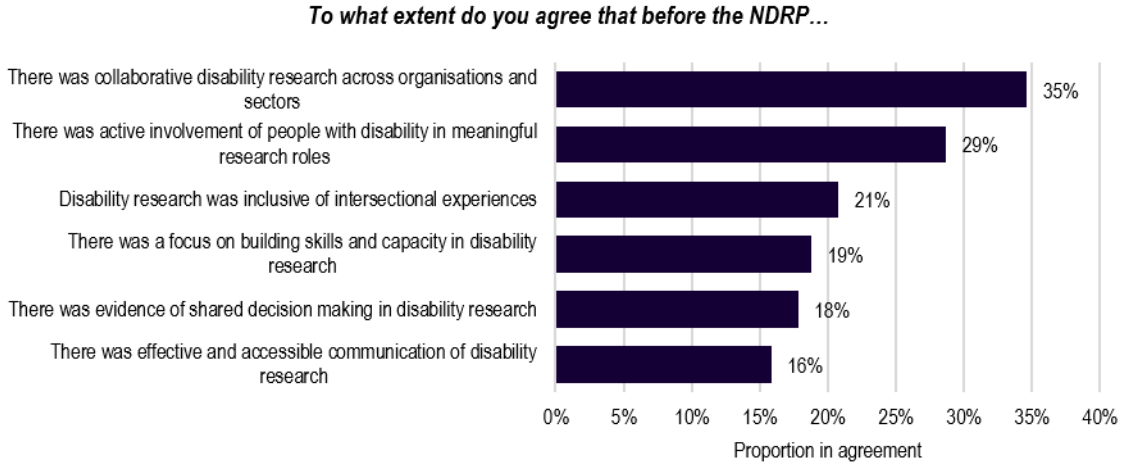
[66] Australian Education Research Organisation. (2025). *Annual report 2025.* Accessed June 2026: https://www.edresearch.edu.au/other/agency-publications/annual-report-2025; Black Dog Institute. Submissions and Evidence Briefs. (2026). Accessed June 2026: https://www.blackdoginstitute.org.au/about/policy-advocacy/submissions-and-evidence-briefs/; Australia's National Research Organisation for Women's Safety. (2025). *Annual Report 2024-25.* Accessed June 2026: https://www.anrows.org.au/publication/anrows-2024-2025-annual-report/.

Without the NDRP, the progress made in building trusted relationships would be lost, which may also risk a high erosion of trust among the disability community and in the commitments of governments to support the disability community through strategies and policies. Only 35% of survey respondents stated that there was collaborative disability research across disability research before the NDRP.

Capacity building, shared decision making and effective communication of disability research are core functions which would be reduced without the NDRP. Of note, only 20% of survey respondents agreed that before the NDRP there was evidence of shared decision making in disability research, and only 18% agreed there was effective and accessible communication of disability research.

Without the NDRP, the research and policy sector would revert to the status quo, with no leading independent voice or driver of best practices in best practice in co-design and meaningful involvement or research dissemination and translation.

Figure 2.2 Stakeholder perception of practices in the absence of the NDRP



Source: NDRP Survey, analysis by ACIL Allen

2.6 Summary

There is a clear need for the NDRP to address historical and systemic issues regarding disability research which is firmly supported by stakeholders. Historic issues in disability research included a narrow focus on medical or clinical research only, and a lack of inclusion of people with lived experience in research. The need for the NDRP was articulated through key policy documents leading up to its establishment, as well as through entrenched and recognised gaps in quality disability research, collaboration and translation. The Royal Commission and Australia's Disability Strategy emphasised the need for improved disability research in Australia, and the NDRP was specifically named as a mechanism to bolster this. The NDRP's Research Agenda is a direct enabler of Australia's Disability Strategy, with each research area directly linked to outcome areas.

The NDRP is uniquely positioned at the interface of the disability community, researchers and government, as an independent organisation that seeks to foster collaboration across these groups. There is no directly comparable organisation fulfilling all of the NDRP's functions. Although some organisations undertake similar functions across each of research funding, facilitation of partnership and collaboration, knowledge dissemination and translation, there is no other organisation that fulfills all of these functions at a national scale to this scope in the disability sector.

Without the NDRP, the disability research sector would revert to a system that does not prioritise inclusion, lived experience and social models of disability. It would result in a lower level of focus on capacity building and power sharing for people with disability. This would ultimately mean that the needs articulated through the Royal Commission and Australia's Disability Strategy would not be addressed, as the research sector would revert to the former status quo.

While the NDRP is well designed to address the well-recognised issues, the largest challenge will be in balancing the needs of all groups, given differing stakeholder needs, expectations and priorities.

3 Activity and impact

This chapter examines outcomes achieved across the NDRP's 4 strategic focus areas, using the pathway to impact approach.

3.1 Approach to measuring impact

The NDRP has an ambitious vision to transform policy and practice in Australia through disability-led research. This is a multifaceted challenge and requires interrelated activities, long-term investment and effort given the long-entrenched disempowerment of people with disability and underinvestment in the sector. Concurrently, the NDRP has had to establish the organisation, delivering significant foundational work to set up structures, build partnerships and establish strategic directions.

The 'pathway to impact' approach to measuring effectiveness evaluates the NDRP's progress along a continuum, from the foundational establishment to the achievement of long-term, systemic change. Progress is cumulative, whereby activities lay the groundwork for outputs, outputs enable outcomes, and outcomes contribute to impact over time.

This approach is appropriate for new organisations, where a conventional impact evaluation would risk understating genuine progress. Organisations that are building foundations may have little impact to show in the near term, not because they are underperforming, but because of the time taken to materialise outcomes fully.

The pathway to impact approach is important for organisations working in sectors with long and complex histories of disempowerment and distrust. Organisations in these settings take longer to develop their foundations given the need to build trust and respect, support engagement and participation, and establish meaningful relationships.

Each of the strategic focus areas has been assessed against standardised measures from 'Establishing' to 'Transforming' (Table 3.1). This chapter is structured by the 4 strategic focus areas:

— Strategic focus area 1: Build a sustainable foundation
— Strategic focus area 2: Fund research done by and with people with disability
— Strategic focus area 3: Strengthen disability research capacity
— Strategic focus area 4: Mobilise evidence for action.

Table 3.1 Pathway to impact – Rating descriptions

Rating	Description
Establishing	Foundational activities are underway; early outputs are beginning to emerge but work is still being established and resourced.
Delivering	Outputs are being produced consistently; there is early evidence of reach or uptake, but outcomes are not yet demonstrated.
Influencing	Short-to-medium term outcomes are evident; activities are changing knowledge, capability, or practice in the target system.
Transforming	Activities are contributing to longer-term, systemic change; there is evidence of durable impact on the lives of people with disability or the systems that support them.

Source: ACIL Allen

3.2 Strategic Focus Area 1: Build a sustainable foundation

Overview

This strategic focus area aims to establish the NDRP as an enduring enabler that connects stakeholders and strengthens collaboration to deliver research led by and with people with disability. It also considers securing ongoing and diverse funding to secure the NDRP's position into the future. The pathway to impact for this focus area is shown in Figure 3.1.

Figure 3.1 Pathway to impact for *Building a sustainable foundation*



Note: Specific outcomes per stage are outlined in Appendix C.

Source: ACIL Allen

The NDRP has begun to **influence** connection and collaboration in the sector and is in a strong position to continue to do so. This has been achieved by establishing the foundational trust in the organisation, establishing brand awareness, and engaging directly with stakeholders. Stakeholders trust the NDRP to champion disability-led research and to connect the sector together. Though transformational connection and collaboration remains a long-term goal, the current activities lay the foundation for the NDRP's envisioned role, which will be achieved as partnerships are deepened and formalised over time.

Fundraising activities fall under this strategic focus area; however, these are addressed separately under Efficiency in chapter 4.

Key foundational activities linked to this strategic focus area include:

— establishment of the organisation
— generating awareness through broad engagement
— building a network of collaborators and partnerships
— building trust in the values, way of working, and processes
— creating opportunities for connection and collaboration in the sector.

Awareness raising

The NDRP has established an extensive network of connected stakeholders through its broad media and web engagement. Across its web promotions and advertising campaigns, the NDRP has attracted 19,897 engagements. This has translated into 2,316 form submissions requesting a form of engagement with the NDRP. Through these submissions the NDRP has built a network of collaborators (6,629 contacts), as well as a list of newsletter subscribers (3,332). This established network is a key vehicle to promote and share information with extensive coverage across, community, and Government stakeholders. A detailed breakdown of web engagement and media presence is provided in Appendix F.1.

The NDRP has generated significant awareness and engagement through its events and webinars. The NDRP's Evidence to Action events bring together the disability community through the exploration of evidence, identification of research gaps, and building of connections. These events have had significant registrations (2,283), with a diversity of registrations across research, community, and government stakeholders. A breakdown of engagement by role is in Appendix F.1. There was also clear diversity amongst state participants, with strong engagement from Victoria (25%), NSW (22%) and QLD (13%), and to a lesser extent ACT (8%), WA (6%), and SA (5%).

While there is strong awareness of the NDRP in the disability sector, the organisation is not yet known more broadly. DROs and government stakeholders noted that the NDRP had not yet established connections with related policy areas, such as health and ageing, which are important given the intersect of people with disability with these sectors. This is reflected in part in its as-yet limited engagement with other funders, with only initial meetings with MRFF and NHMRC, as well as HRECs and university processes. This is to be expected at this stage of the organisation's maturity, where the focus needed to be on the disability sector to establish appropriate foundations.

> *"I feel like it's not known outside the disability circles. There are groups and research groups that are linked with disability but come at it more medical perspective, I don't think they have ever heard of the NDRP, those people would benefit the most from NDRP inclusive approach." (Research applicant)*

Engagement and partnerships

The NDRP has undertaken a significant breadth of direct engagement activates spanning 61 organisations across government, community and research stakeholders. A full summary of organisations engaged is provided in Appendix F.1. The NDRP has begun to establish formalised partnerships that provide the foundations for longer-term engagement and success. Examples include:

- the establishment of an MOU with Girra Maa (University of Technology Sydney), the UTS School of Public Health's Indigenous Health Discipline, which creates a shared commitment to advancing culturally safe, Indigenous-led disability research and to supporting the next generation of First Nations disability researchers, practitioners, and leaders. It will also provide a framework for collaboration in support of Indigenous-led disability research, knowledge succession, and national research leadership
- partnership with APO in the delivery of the NDRP's Disability Research Collection
- partnership with University of New South Wales in the delivery of an Inclusive Ethics Project.
- partnership with Griffith University to sponsor places in the Citizen Research Essentials course for people with disability.

The majority of stakeholders are satisfied with their partnerships with the NDRP (Table 3.2). Stakeholders reflected positively on the NDRP's networks, understanding of relationships and nuance, and generation of true partnerships. The NDRP was seen to be building trusting and credible relationships.

Table 3.2 Level of agreement on quality of partnership with NDRP

Partnerships	Overall	Research	Community	Government
My organisation **values a partnership** with the NDRP.	60%	73%	75%	60%
Expectations between my organisation and the NDRP **are clear and understood.**	61%	58%	67%	33%
The relationship or partnership between my organisation and the NDRP is **adding value to our organisation** (rather than duplicating).	51%	46%	58%	27%
My organisation is **satisfied** with its relationship or partnership with the NDRP.	60%	58%	62%	36%
Average	*58%*	*59%*	*66%*	*39%*

Note: Percentages represent the proportion strongly agreeing or agreeing to the statement.

Source: NDRP Survey, analysis by ACIL Allen.

However, partnerships are not yet widespread or formalised across the breadth of stakeholders, and especially government. This is reflected in the lower responses from government stakeholders in the survey. Some government stakeholders stated that they had yet to see significant impacts from the NDRP. They noted that awareness is not yet widespread and that the work had not translated into research that was impacting policy. However, these perceptions are to be expected given the maturity of the NDRP and the lack of a requirement for government agencies to work with the NDRP.

> *"Biggest point in the engagement working with the NDRP is that it's missing the strategic big picture when working with policymakers, that isn't quite there yet. And potentially a bit of policy nous about tangible outcomes that need to be produced at the end of it." (Government stakeholder)*

The NDRP has established a foundation for future partnerships through its membership structure and plans for increased engagement with Government. The NDRP has established a membership structure as part of its constitution but has yet to forge memberships as part of its relationships. This has been due to governance deliberations about managing conflicts of interest and perceptions that members might receive privileged access to research funding or activities of the NDRP. In its startup phase as an independent organisation, building the sustainable foundation for partnerships outside formal membership of the company, which sits in a governance domain, has been prioritised. This creates a clear pathway by stipulating the eligibility and requirements to be an organisation or individual members. The NDRP has created a Government Relations Strategy which it plans to implement in 2026. It envisions the NDRP as a pragmatic collaborator with government in line with its principles. It identifies where the NDRP can have influence with government priorities, such as NDIS fiscal sustainability and realising rights as under the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. This plan identifies potential partners and prioritises them, with a plan to increase engagement throughout 2026.

A key challenge for the NDRP is to bring together disparate stakeholder groups, each with differing needs, incentives and timelines, to strengthen collaborations. The independence of the NDRP is essential here in brokering the connection between the disability community, research sector and government. In this independent role, the NDRP can promote connections with between the disability and research community and the government. Without being positioned within one of these groups, the NDRP can act as a neutral link across groups. This is important to reduce the disconnect between policy, research and community aspirations, and to move towards research translation.

> *"It is good to have that level of independence or separation. In First Nations contexts we have organisations we reach out to act as a broker to connect with their perspectives, people, and experts. I see the NDRP has a similar value as a central mediator." (Government stakeholder)*

Connection, collaboration, and trust

The NDRP's role as an enabler at the intersection of research, community, and government depends on trust and respect. Activities trust in the NDRP's processes, quality and legitimacy. This trust is especially important in the context of historical disempowerment and underinvestment, where trust is easy to lose and poor engagement can cause further distrust. This has required approach that balances progress with feedback and risk management, as well as in-depth engagement with stakeholders.

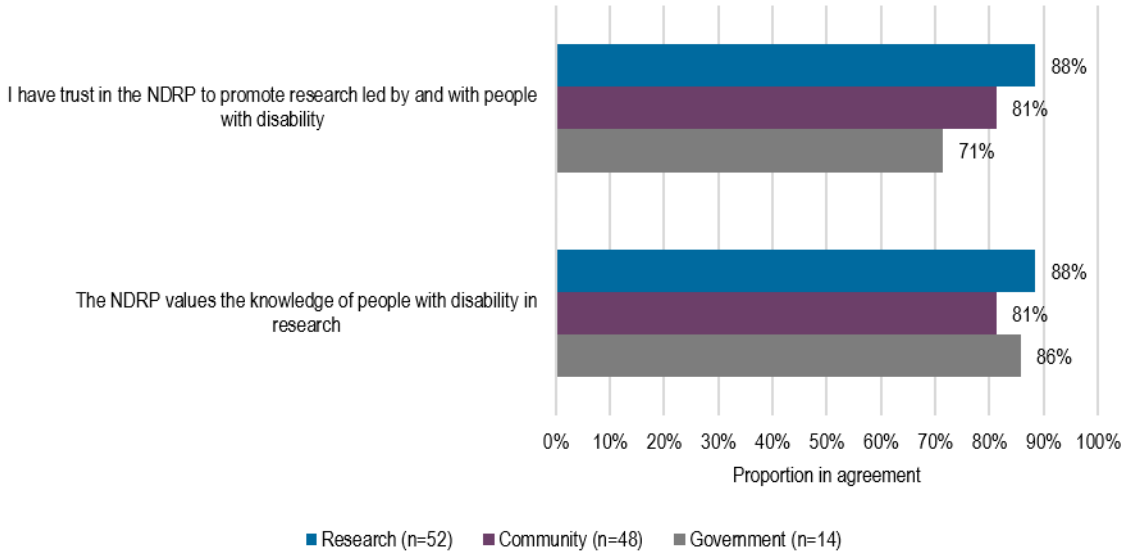
> *"The more you engage with something that isn't inclusive and good, you lose trust within the system and a sector and an approach. Building trust is really hard in this sector." (DRO representative)*

> *"Trusting, productive relationships take time to build and for much too long people with disability have not had their say or little power in research about their lives." (Survey respondent)*

> *"Given the institutional underinvestment, we want to build a castle. We have a business case to start building the castle, and now we need to make sure it doesn't fall down. What we have is very new and you can't overturn systemic issues like colonisation and historical disempowerment immediately. We need a strong NDRP and our focus is if we can get the relationships right between the parts building the castle, you'll see the right research coming out of its building over time." (NDRP leadership)*

The efforts to build trust have made a notable impact, with the majority of stakeholders having trust in the NDRP and recognising the value that the NDRP place on the knowledge of people with disability in research (Figure 3.2)

Figure 3.2 Stakeholder trust in the NDRP



Source: NDRP Survey, analysis by ACIL Allen.

Trust has been built by the NDRP staying true to the Guiding Principles. Stakeholders reported that the NDRP embodies best practice in its extensive engagement, demonstrating disability-led, disability-inclusive, and co-design approaches in all its activities as well as having clear involvement of lived experience.

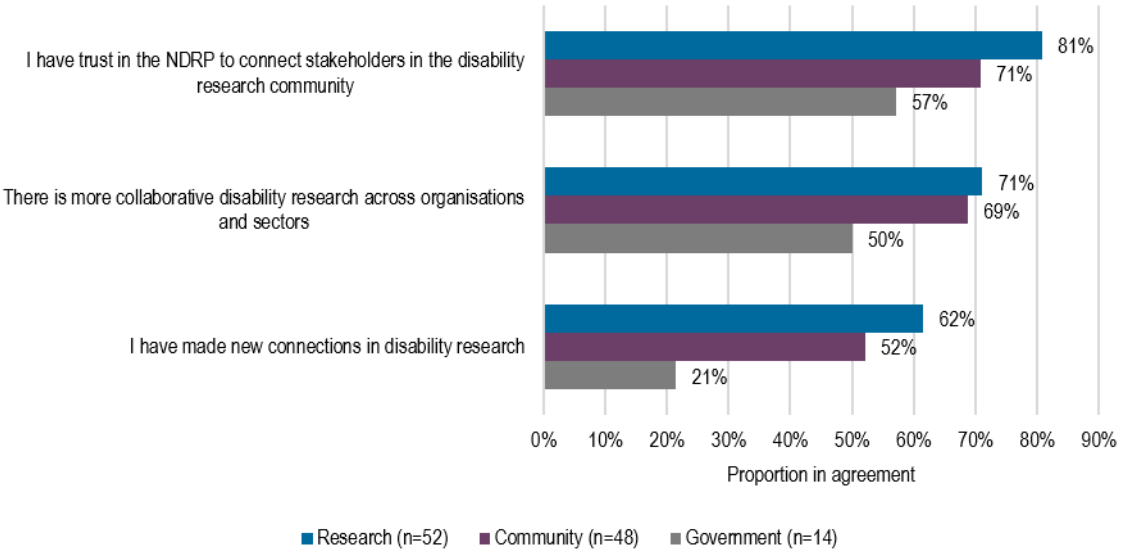
> *"Trust is built in the way they present and engage. They are a cohesive workplace that is respectful, and inclusive. Often research funding bodies are not very helpful or supportive, and don't give meaningful feedback or guidance. The NDRP has given that support in a way that is accessible and personable." (DRO representative)*

"When I look at the quality of research that the NDRP puts out – personally I know that has to be done with good frameworks. The proof is in the pudding." (DRO representative)

Trust has translated into value being placed on the NDRP's outputs, including the development of best practice for disability research. Through consultation and iteration, the NDRP developed guidelines and requirements for co-design, partnerships, and capacity building. These have facilitated both capability-building and the integrity of its research funding rounds and practice. The NDRP's practice has garnered broad approval from stakeholders, and many reported that they use the NDRP as the example in this space for their own practice.

Through the delivery of its activities, the NDRP has established the foundational trust required to enable connection and collaboration (Figure 3.3). Impacts are also starting to be seen, with most stakeholders reporting that there is more collaborative disability research across organisations and sectors, and about half reporting they themselves had made new connections. Government stakeholders, in line with abovementioned findings, reported lower trust and impact which is to be anticipated given their lower involvement in the breadth of the NDRP's functions.

Figure 3.3 Stakeholder agreement that the NDRP promotes connection and collaboration



Source: NDRP Survey, analysis by ACIL Allen.

A breadth of NDRP activities conducted through other focus areas also generate opportunities for stakeholder connections and collaborations:

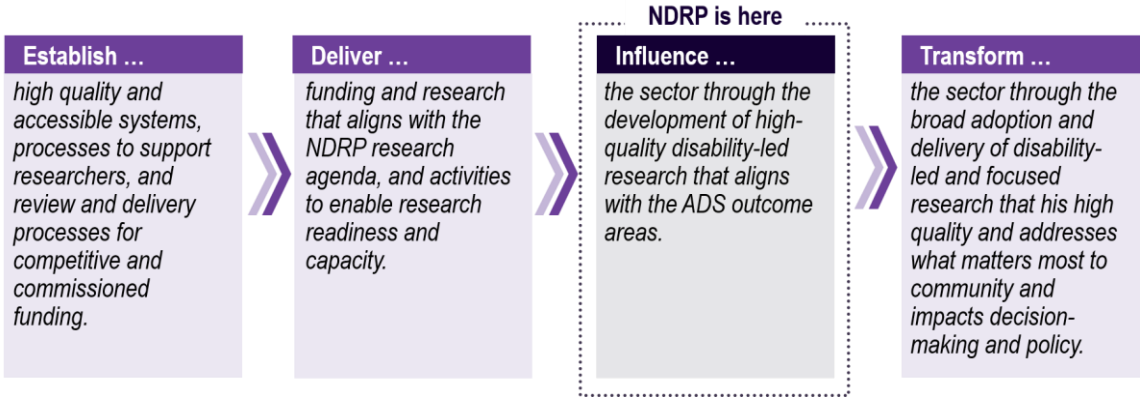
- Guidelines for the NDRP grant funding rounds stipulate the need for meaningful co-design, requiring that partnerships are formed between research organisations and community organisations to ensure the research is disability-led and inclusive. Application data indicates that 89% of applications across Rounds 1, 2, and the CRP had cross-sector collaboration.
- Successful NDRP grant applicants were provided with additional funding, opportunities, and resourcing for co-researchers with disability to attend engagements at NDRP events, conferences, and Australia's Disability Strategy National Forum. This facilitated their exposure and connection to the broader disability research and policy community.
- DRLP participants are encouraged to make additional connections through the stipend for professional development. These participants have utilised this funding to attend conferences and workshops to make connections. The DRLP Community of Practice facilitates the participants to connect with each-other as researchers.

3.3 Strategic Focus Area 2: Fund research done by and with people with disability

Overview

The strategic focus area aims to deliver disability-led and focused research that addresses critical issues that matter most to people with disability and impacts decision-making and policy. The pathway to impact for this focus area is shown in Figure 3.4.

Figure 3.4 Pathway to impact – Fund research done by and with people with disability



Note: Specific outcomes per stage are outlined in Appendix C.

Source: ACIL Allen

The NDRP is clearly **influencing** the sector through research. Research practices have been shown to be high quality, disability-led, disability-inclusive, and supported by power-sharing to facilitate co-design and co-production. The research funded and facilitated is in line with the NDRP's Research Agenda, which is widely supported and aligns to Australia's Disability Strategy Outcome Areas. Funding has been delivered effectively and accessibly, with improvements over time. Transformational change is a long-term goal. Research takes time to translate into policy-related impacts, and the NDRP's first round of research is yet to be completed and distributed.

Key activities related to this strategic focus area include:

— Competitive grant rounds – enable researchers and community organisations to apply for and conduct research. This has been delivered twice, the first in 2025 and the second in 2026. The research topic was selected from the NDRP's Research Agenda, and applications were required to engage in true partnership and co-design with people with disability. Applications were assessed based on their leadership and inclusion of people with disability alongside their relevance and impact, quality, capacity, and risk management.[67]

— The Commissioned Research Project (CRP) – a new approach to disability research commissioning, where the priority identified by the funding partner is refined and prioritised through engagement with the disability community. The research is expected to be delivered with people with disability as co-researchers. The model aims to deliver research that is more relevant and actionable.[68] The first iteration of the CRP is being delivered with DHDA, with the first stage completed (co-design) and research underway.

[67] NDRP, 2026 Disability Research Gunding Grant Guidelines, 2026 Funding Grant Guidelines 2026 02 23 FINAL.docx
[68] Sax Institute, June 2026, NDRP Evaluation of the Commissioned Research Project, [unpublished].

— The Rapid Policy Research Collaboration (RPRC) – conducts rapid procurement of research to address government-identified urgent policy priorities. The process works to identify time-sensitive policy or reform priorities and then works with community and government stakeholders to refine and prioritise scope so that it is relevant, actionable, and supported. The prioritisation process has been delivered for the first time. Having conducted consultations with government and then community stakeholders, a consolidated list of priorities were identified and refined. Research has not yet commenced.

High quality and accessible processes

The reputation of the NDRP is dependent on the quality and accessibility of its processes, so that the research is both of high integrity and based on meaningful engagement with the disability community. Both the competitive grant rounds and the CRP were found to be accessible and high quality, while the RPRC has yet to be delivered.

Competitive grant rounds

The competitive grant rounds were found to be accessible, inclusive, and rigorous. Community stakeholders reported that the NDRP's approach was more inclusive and supportive than other application processes, with concerted effort to build capability and support co-design and inclusivity throughout.

Researchers reported that the process for competitive grant rounds was simpler than other funding organisations. Many compared their prior experiences in applying for funding through the ARC or NHMRC and stated that the NDRP had clearer aims of its research funding and assessment criteria. Additionally, Round 1 differed from other grant processes by providing funding to develop a research proposal, which was unique and valued for its role in ensuring research is inclusive of disability perspectives from the outset of research development.

> *"So often you're expected to do co-design research, but question hasn't been co-designed, it's fundamentally flawed from start. It's awesome to co-design research question, and to have funding available for people to participate in the co-design of the development of a research project." (Researcher)*

The Research Round 1 Process Review the NDRP undertook as part of its internal monitoring, evaluation and learning approach, found that applicants valued the supportive and inclusive approach adopted by the NDRP, particularly the additional support through information sessions and drop-ins.[69] The assessment process was reported to be rigorous and fair, while offering capacity building for both applicants and reviewers. This Review identified improvements for Round 2, including starting earlier, aligning guidelines with systems, reducing pressure on reviewers, clarifying roles for the Research Committee, and strengthening project support. Review also identified risks regarding under-resourcing for processing large numbers of applications. This is due to the NDRP's small scale and commitment to capacity building, accessibility, and inclusion.

The Review led to improvements in the design of Round 2. Round 2 expanded the funding availability as well as the scope of research, adding in 2 additional research areas, and funding projects to conduct research beyond the scoping of a research question (as in Round 1). Due to delays, the timeframe for research projects was shortened from 18 to 12 months, which was not well received by applicants.

> *"Everyone we are working with is on fixed term contracts, they need to know whether they have employment or not. I understand why they have pushed out timeframes, but for projects to be undertaken there needs to be more clarity around those timeframes early on." (Researcher)*

[69] Skladzien, E., NDRP Research Round 1 Process Review, [unpublished].

Newer and smaller community organisations perceived that the application process prioritises organisations with existing capacity. The NDRP has a clear imperative for research quality which is reflected in its high bar for co-design, collaboration, and research capacity. These requirements are more difficult to meet for organisations with lower existing capability and fewer existing partnerships, meaning that the application is more difficult for them to make, and they are less likely to be funded. This experience was labelled by some as 'institutional', implying it was contrary to a community and capability-building experience that they would want. This is reflected in part by the fact that the majority of lead organisations are universities or higher education institutions (69%). Though cross sector collaboration with partners is high, as noted before, this may indicate that the research ability is still dependent on these institutions as community organisations don't yet have the capability to undertake research themselves.

This balance between quality and capability-building is a difficult one for the NDRP, especially when demand so far exceeds their supply of funds. This issue may be mitigated in future by the NDRP's plans to offer a microcredential to both successful and unsuccessful applicants, as outlined in Section 3.4.

> *"The application process relies on existing codesign partnership and experiences." (Research applicant)*

Although stakeholders spoke positively about the NDRP's commitment to accessibility, some research applicants reported issues with the application portal, limiting its accessibility and efficiency. The current application portal only allows one person to edit the application at a time, and the application form cannot currently be downloaded in a format that enables accessibility. For example, the form was reportedly not screen readable in the system, and editing collaboratively was not easy. This limits the accessibility and efficiency of the grants process.

> *"The grants process, application, Smarty Grants, you can't have more than one person, also having collaboration with someone who is blind, that system is not accessible for them at all, not only the system, you download the application, you can't cut and paste, only characters, it's not screen readable, making the form more accessible would be good." (Researcher)*

Commissioned Research Project

The CRP was independently evaluated. The evaluation found that the CRP had been delivered in accordance with the NDRP's Guiding Principles in a way that was fair, transparent, and accessible. The CRP was reported to have successfully bridged both government and community stakeholders, with their different constraints, timelines, and ways of working.

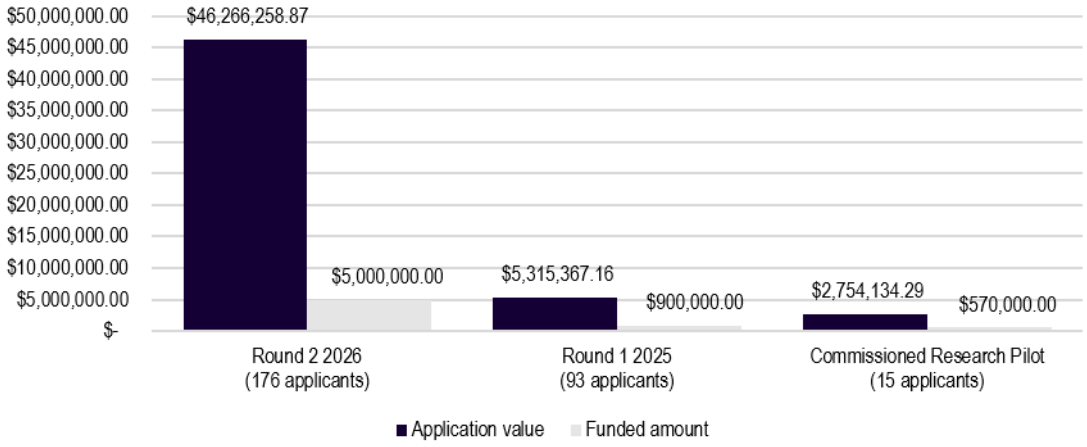
Like the competitive grant rounds, the evaluation found that the NDRP's approach is more resource intensive in order to genuinely centre lived experience, manage complex governance, and hold the balance between community priorities and government needs. The evaluation concluded the NDRP did so successfully, but that investment in dedicated infrastructure will be needed for the CRP to grow.[70]

Funding and research delivery

The demand for funding has been significant, reflective of a high level of interest. The value of applications for competitive grant rounds totalled more than 6 times the available budget for Round 1, growing to just over 9 times the available funding for Round 2. Applications for commissioned research were 5 times the available budget. In total, the NDRP has delivered, or is in the process of delivering, $6.47 million in funding, yet there remains a sizeable cohort of unfunded yet worthy applicants. In total, 15 applicants were granted an average of $57,154 in Round 1, Round 2 applicants have yet to be awarded though have requested an average of $262,876, and one applicant was awarded in the CRP with average funding requested $183,609.

[70] Sax Institute, June 2026, NDRP Evaluation of the Commissioned Research Project, [unpublished].

Figure 3.5 Research grants



Source: NDRP program data, analysis by ACIL Allen.

This funding has been delivered alongside research readiness activities, including information sessions, feedback sessions, and application feedback. These are explored in more detail as capability-building activities in Section 3.4.

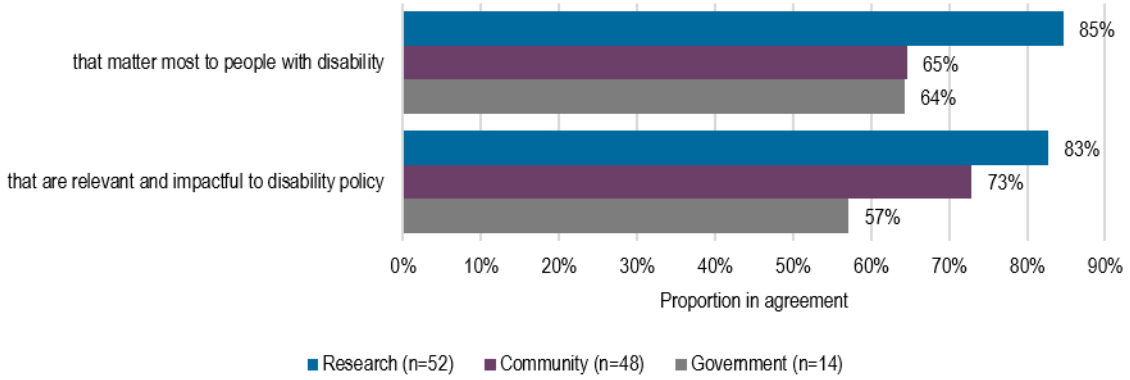
Alignment with community and policy objectives

The NDRP's funded research topics largely meets the dual goals of focusing on what matters most to people with disability and being relevant and impactful to disability policy (Figure 3.7). NDRP Easy Read Survey respondents reported that the NDRP is helping others to undertake important research (88%, n=8). While a large majority of research stakeholders believe the NDRP's research agenda aligns with community and policy needs, there is less emphatic support from community and government stakeholders.

The lower ratings from government stakeholders may reflect the diverse policy and portfolio needs across departments and jurisdictions. The NDRP sits at the intersection of the needs of different groups, which do not always align. Managing these diverse needs, and the diversity of needs and perspectives within these groups, is a difficult task.

> *"The challenge is how research can push policy makers to understand their process and its uncertainty, while also being practical to have an impact on how policy is being done." (Researcher)*

Figure 3.6 Stakeholder agreement that the NDRP promotes and conducts research...



Source: NDRP Survey, analysis by ACIL Allen.

There are strong perceptions that funded research has aligned with critical issues for the disability community. The NDRP Research Agenda outlines the priorities for research. It was developed in collaboration with people with disability and representative organisations over two years from 2021-2023.[71]

The NDRP has received strong support from community stakeholders for the Research Agenda. Stakeholders noted that research priorities reflected issues important to the community, and that there was clear consultation in their development.

> *"I feel they [the NDRP] have done a good job establishing disability community priorities at the start, aligning with royal commission and highlighting biggest concerns." (Research applicant)*

> *"I like to see restrictive practices addressed early; it signals deviation from existing approaches. What they're focusing on there would have been unthinkable 10 years ago, ending restrictive practices would have been impossible. It matters." (DRO representative)*

There were some criticisms that prioritised and funded research topics were duplicative with the findings of existing research and the Royal Commission. However, stakeholders were pleased that Round 2 also focussed on inclusion of accessibility and inclusion.

> *"I was surprised they chose safety, given just had a whole Royal Commission on that. Felt like people were ready to move on, we know the royal commission's findings were clear, broader systematic factors are the drivers of violence, exploitation." (Research applicant)*

Research has seen to align closely with policy objectives, maximising the potential impact. The NDRP Research Agenda aligns explicitly with Australia's Disability Strategy Outcome Areas so as to ensure research is policy relevant. As a result, all research applications funded by the NDRP have aligned with the Outcome Areas.

The CRP and RPRC also build in direct government consultation. Both processes involved undertaking consultation with government to understand the priorities for policy development, supported by subsequent consultation with community stakeholders to refine and prioritise research questions. This provides a more direct and responsive approach to research development for policy needs.

The NDRP's funding aligned with 3 Outcome Areas (Table 3.3) as well as a recommendation of the Disability Royal Commission.

[71] NDRP, 2024, Research Agenda, NDRP - Research Agenda

Table 3.3 NDRP Research funding alignment to ADS Outcome Areas

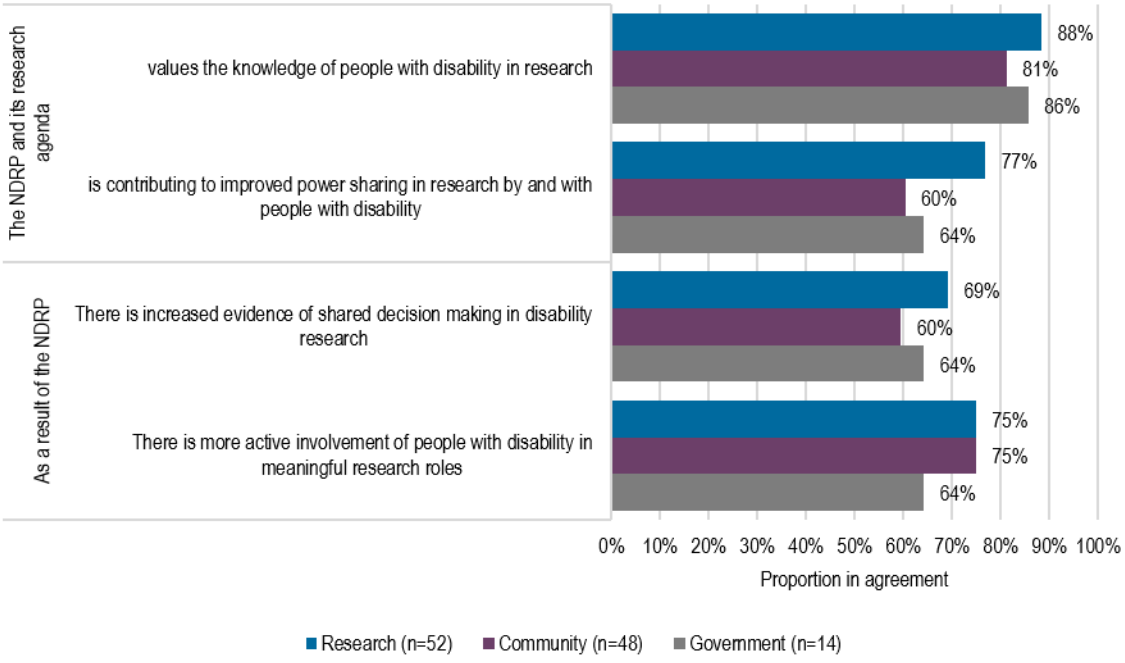
Research activity	Topic	ADS Outcome Area
Round 1 2025	Safety of people with disability	3: Safety, rights and justice
Round 2 2026	Safety of people with disability	3: Safety, rights and justice
	Pathways to elimination of restrictive practices	3: Safety, rights and justice Disability Royal Commission Recommendation 6.36[72]
	Accessible and inclusive communities	2: Inclusive homes and communities
Commissioned Research Project	How can people with disability better transition from education and training to employment?	1: Employment and Financial Security

Source: NDRP Research Agenda

Disability-led research

The NDRP has delivered disability-led research that is improving the valuing of knowledge of people with disability in research, improving power sharing, shared decision-making, and meaningful involvement of people with disability (Figure 3.7). NDRP Easy Read Survey respondents reported that the NDRP cares about what people with disability know in research (100%, n=7) and listens to what they have to say (88%, n=8). Practice approval and impacts were reported to be slightly lower by government and community stakeholders, especially regarding power sharing and shared decision-making. However, all those that were funded by the NDRP reported these impacts strongly (all over 85%), indicating that there may be limited visibility of these practices for other stakeholders given research has not yet been released.

Figure 3.7 Stakeholder approval of the NDRP's disability-led approach



Source: NDRP Survey, analysis by ACIL Allen.

[72] Recommendation 6.36 – Immediate action to provide that certain restrictive practices must not be used

The NDRP has established a clear method and standards by which disability-led and inclusive research is to be conducted. This has been formalised in requirements for application, toolkits for partnerships and co-design, and is repeated throughout information sessions for funding rounds. Disability leadership has been a strong part of the applications made to and funded by the NDRP. Applications with disability leadership grew from 72% in Round 1 to 96% in Round 2, which was matched by 93% in the CRP.

The NDRP's focus on genuine inclusion and co-design has enabled researchers to undertake methodologies are accessible and demonstrating best practice. For example, researchers discussed how they had engaged multiple people with lived experience in their research and had utilised accessible technologies and supports during the research process. This went beyond what researchers had previously seen or experienced in the development of a research proposal.

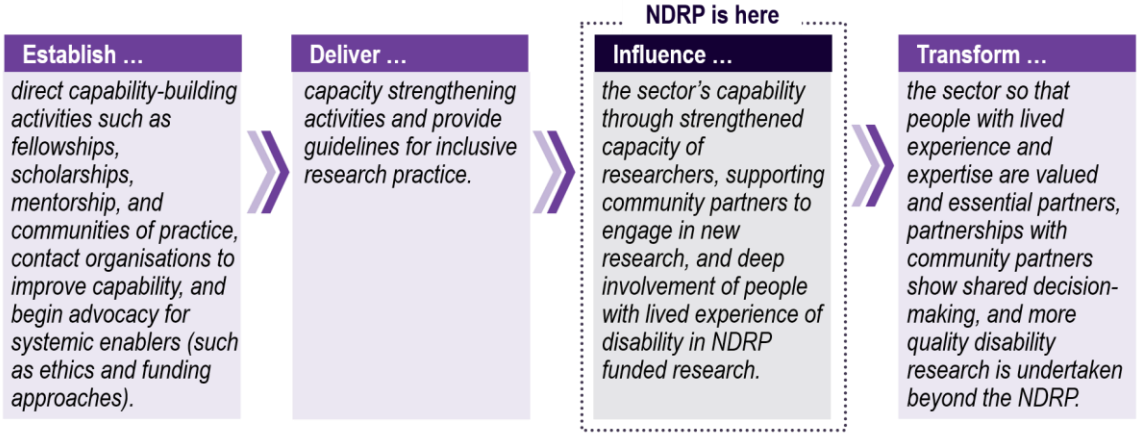
> *"Huge outcome for us, looking around, I don't know that there has ever been focus groups with this many tactile Auslan users. We had to book 14 interpreters to have people with deaf blindness contributing to research in this way, it is a powerful outcome to have that documented." (Researcher)*

3.4 Strategic Focus Area 3: Strengthen disability research capacity

Overview

The strategic focus area aims to better equip researchers and research institutions to undertake and support quality, inclusive disability research with greater efforts to address power sharing and intersectionality. The pathway to impact for this focus area is shown in Figure 3.8.

Figure 3.8 Pathway to impact – Strengthen disability research capacity



Note: Specific outcomes per stage are outlined in Appendix C.

Source: ACIL Allen

The NDRP has clearly **influenced** the sector through capability-building. The establishment and embodiment of best practice sets the example for the sector, and capability building activities have been delivered as planned with a clear impact on researchers. The scope of its activities have been small and more focused on individual capability than systemic capacity. Longer term outcomes will depend on strategic engagements and partnerships which are still being established.

Key activities related to this strategic focus area are outlined in the NDRP's Plan to Strengthen Research Capacity. The plan outlines how the NDRP plans to impact capability, individuals research skills, and capacity, system-wide institutional factors. The plan outlines actions to improve individual knowledge and skills, as well as address systemic level issues such as ethics frameworks, university systems, research collaborations, dataset linkage, and funding. Activities delivered include:

- Direct capability building activities:
  - the DRLP which provided professional development support, a financial subsidy, and support through a Community of Practice (CoP)
  - subsidy of the Citizen Research Essentials micro-credential with Griffith University
- Indirect capability building activities:
  - Competitive funding rounds have hands-on support through information sessions, drop-in sessions, and extensive feedback.
  - The successful teams for Round 1 of the competitive funding round were supported through a Community of Practice.

This strategic focus area experienced the most delays and has plans for fellowships and mentorships that have yet to come to fruition. These have been delayed in part due to the focus on other activities such as Round 1 of the competitive grant rounds.

Direct capability building

Disability Research Leadership Program

The DRLP provides direct support to students with disability in higher research degrees to support their research and professional development. The design of the DRLP was based on consultation with current, former and future Masters by Research and PhD students with disability and supervisors, which called for: flexibility, financial barriers, connection and community, information, supervision, and disability support services.

The first iteration of the DRLP commenced in 2026 for 14 students with disability in higher research degrees. These students, selected from 54 applicants, were provided with academic funding, a personal stipend, and a CoP. The academic funding provides opportunities for students to attend professional development activities, conferences, as well as to cover the additional cost of co-design and disability-led research. The personal stipend provides financial support for participants in their daily lives, helping them to overcome the everyday barriers that face students living with disability. Participants reported that it was an essential insight of the NDRP to recognise the barriers beyond professional costs that prevent their participation in research.

> *"It's expensive to experience disability, and it's rare to have both a stipend and professional development to overcome those barriers. It's exceptional and important and best practice. It demonstrates to governments and national funding bodies that if you want disability-led research, here is how you do it: you must fund the people as well as the project." (DRLP participant)*

The DRLP CoP brings participants together to share knowledge and skills in a disability-led and co-designed practice. This is supporting participants to build their confidence and research capacities, in addition to offering an opportunity to contribute to the broader disability community.

> *"I think the DRLP is great. It is building capacity and confidence of new disability researchers, which is needed because there isn't expertise within universities to develop it." (DRLP participant)*

DRLP participants reported that the recognition and support of the NDRP connected them to their motivation to be a researcher as well as with the disability community itself.

> *"I also feel like the NDRP has validated myself as a researcher and disability leader, it's given me the impetus to leverage lived experience to tap into my own lived experience." (DRLP participant)*
>
> *"I feel proud to be part of this trailblazing moment of disability research history in Australia." (DRLP participant)*
>
> *"The university I'm at doesn't really do inclusion well. When the university sent out the NDRP fellowship application and it was easy to read, easy to action and the team, the response, the feedback and the acceptance on a grant panel was offered. I finally felt that maybe the decision to do my PhD was a good one. I'd been regretting it for an awfully long time." (DRLP participant)*

It was noted, however, that the DRLP participants felt sidelined compared to other activities at times. They felt that the DRLP was not given equal attention in the NDRP's public activities, with a greater focus on funding rounds. Participants felt that the recognition and connection of the DRLP was essential to its value and needed to be given its own specific attention. However, it is important to balance these perspectives with a recognition of the small staffing complement of the NDRP and the significant scope of activity that is being delivered.

The second intake of the DRLP plans to extend this program to postdoctoral fellows, which will expand the scope of the NDRP's direct capability-building activities further.

Microcredential

The NDRP has recently established a broader pathway for researcher capability-building, creating an additional avenue for those not captured by their other activities. The NDRP has established a subsidy for the Citizen Research Essentials micro-credential. The NDRP has partnered with Griffith University to provide a subsidy for this micro credential that supports citizen researchers with lived experience to participate in the leadership, project work, data collection, analysis and sharing of research findings. [73]

The course is delivered by Griffith University and will be offered to 150 people with lived experience, with one having completed it thus far. Applicants will not require previous education, providing opportunities for new researchers. This offering has been provided to smaller community advocacy organisations and is planned to be offered to Round 2 teams – both successful and unsuccessful.

Indirect capability building

Grant recipient support

Grant recipients' capability was supported through the design of the NDRP research funding which prioritised both the co-design or research proposals or evidence synthesis. Grant recipients reported that their experience in an NDRP-funded project strengthened their ability to undertake co-design and design effective research projects. The NDRP's research processes, discussed under strategic focus area 1, provided indirect capability building through the feedback provided to grant applicants. Round 1 was supported through a series of capability-building sessions: co-design introduction, application guidance, a series of drop-in sessions, and a QA session together had 302 registrations, and were reported to be of high quality (4-5/5 for each). A general feedback session was also provided in Round 1 for unsuccessful grant recipients, with Round 2 yet to be awarded, which received 52 registrations and was reported to be of high quality (4.3/5 on average). This support leads to continued engagement and capability building: 60-70% of applications (both successful and unsuccessful) made to Rounds 1 and 2, the CRP, and the DRLP had made a previous application to the NDRP.

[73] https://inclusivefutures.griffith.edu.au/citizen-researcher-essentials-a-short-course

The NDRP provided an opportunity for Round 1 grant recipients to participate in a CoP to facilitate practice sharing. The CoP had good engagement, with 191 registrations across the 15 teams. Participants led the group and moulded it to suit their needs, with opportunities for knowledge sharing as well as connection.

> *"The support from NDRP has changed my life. Both in the ability to conduct research in an accessible way and through the networks with other disabled researchers. It has given me a confidence." (Survey respondent)*

Although the CoP was reported to be informative and interesting, it was found to be too high level to meaningfully build capability. Researchers reported that they would like to have greater opportunities for information sharing to understand how other projects had worked, and to better learn from peer experiences and practices.

> *"Perhaps opportunity where people come, share their projects, talk about it, I might have missed it but might have been useful. You got high level top line, not how they went about it, trouble shot challenges, methodologies. That would be really valuable." (CoP participant)*

Researchers reported it can be challenging for a CoP to strike the right balance between sharing knowledge and upskilling others and facilitating connection. It was noted that although it is valuable having a purpose and focus for a session and sharing information from other projects, if this leans too far into a lecture style it limits the connection opportunities.

> *"It's tricky to do the CoP, such a diverse group of people involved, part of having that is providing time for different people to get to know each other but also needs to be a purpose or people don't turn up. The balance is hard." (CoP participant)*

Guidelines for inclusive practice

The NDRP has established best practice for disability research that is outlined in resources, enforced in requirements, and demonstrated in conduct. Stakeholders noted that the NDRP's best practice is embedded throughout requirements for application, toolkits for partnerships and co-design, information and communication. This is reinforced through the approach to managing accessibility in meetings and communications and setting an expectation for genuine co-design and disability leadership.

> *"The NDRP sets the precedent by modelling excellence. The process makes applicants really think about what they're doing because the NDRP has clear values and upholds excellence, tokenistic gestures won't cut it. It's the first time an independent body has set a really high bar." (Researcher)*

Other organisations reported that the resources the NDRP provides are their 'go-to' for research and consider the NDRP a significant critical friend should they want to conduct more ambitious research. This provides a baseline for all disability research in the sector.

> *"I've been cautious in the past to conduct research on a larger scale that would require ethical approval, as I'd worry that we wouldn't have the support to do it well. With the NDRP we've been considering it as I see the NDRP as a place where we could get that support to do it well." (DRO representative)*

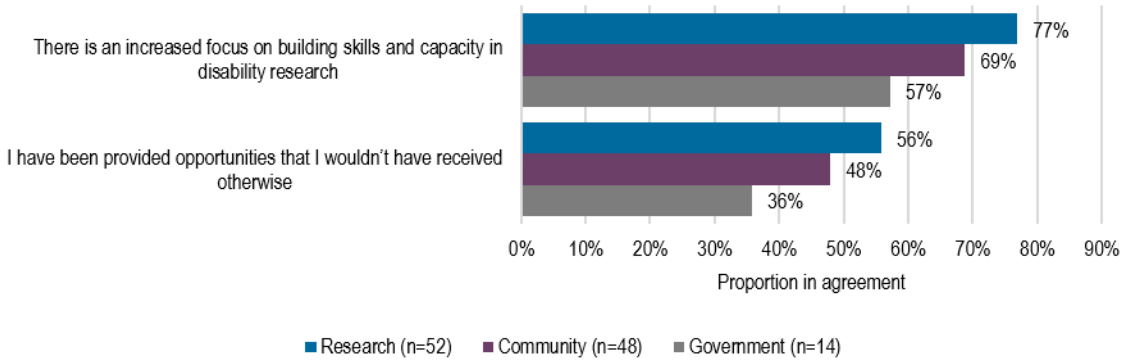
> *"Prior I worked with a smaller organisation, and we did a previous project, and we didn't have the NDRP guidelines – there are so many things that would have been better, either in a formalised capacity but even as a place to look to." (DRO representative)*

> *It's a hard thing to go from no research to be a lead person in a study. It's a hard thing to figure out how to develop those skills without being tokenistic, and to be honest without the NDRP we didn't do it well." (DRO representative)*

Strengthened capacity with partners and lived experience

The NDRP's approach has improved sector-wide capability, more so for research and community stakeholders than government, though impact is in the early days (Figure 3.9). Researchers noted that the NDRP had improved the research capacity of their lived experience partners. Through research projects, the NDRP had provided more opportunities for researchers to take on new responsibilities and step into leadership roles as well. It was also reported that the NDRP is more approachable for people with disability to engage in, allowing new or less experienced researchers to participate or take on more meaningful roles. Translation to individual opportunities was less strong across all stakeholder groups – potentially indicating the lack of reach of current capability-building activities, and the nascent stage of broader activities such as the micro-credential subsidy.

Figure 3.9 Stakeholder agreement that the NDRP impacts skills, capacity, and opportunities



Source: NDRP Survey, analysis by ACIL Allen.

Researchers reported that it was challenging to define where lived experience sits, if multiple or all team members have certain degrees of lived experience. For example, some team members may be a family member or carer for a person with disability, and some people may have disability themselves. Therefore, in addition to engaging a 'lived experience partner', there may indeed be a stronger level of lived experience on the project team than is reported.

> *"We had a number of researchers in our team who also identified as having a disability or being a parent of children with disability, but they weren't necessarily the key lived experience people. It's hard to articulate in the documents, which hats people are wearing in which parts of the role, when you are trying to value or privilege voices that do have lived experience of disability." (Researcher)*

While there are positive signs here, effectiveness may be limited by the resources available to the NDRP. Researchers noted it has taken time to build relationships and co-design work with lived experience participants in the NDRP's Round 1 funding. However, as grant recipients from Round 1 were not guaranteed to receive funding in Round 2, there is uncertainty for how people with lived experience will be kept engaged. If the research proposal does not proceed into a research project, they could lose that connection and potential for capacity uplift.

> *"I feel like there's a bit of responsibility – these people are vulnerable, contributing lived experience, to engage to this point, there's a bit of responsibility to keep the project going." (Research applicant)*

Systemic capacity building

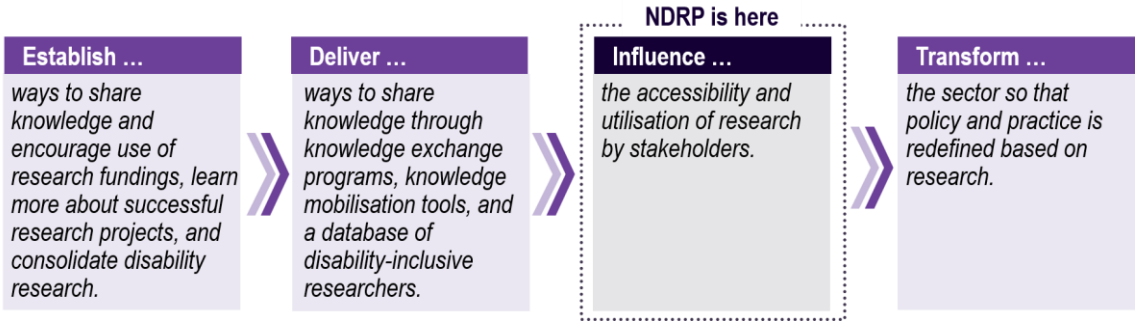
The NDRP has envisioned broader change that addresses systemic barriers, including providing guidance to Government and funding organisations on disability policies and practices, reform of ethics frameworks and assessments, and improving dataset linkage and analysis. These activities remain a work in progress and will build from the relationships and partnerships that are being established. Early examples are the NDRP's partnership with University of New South Wales, which funded the delivery of an Inclusive Ethics Project to update their ethics guidelines and the CEO's appointment to the MRFF Reducing Health Inequities Mission Expert Advisory Panel, which has people with disability as one of the priority populations.[74] The NDRP also has fewer direct levers and incentives by which to influence these factors and will rely on partners being willing to come to the table.

3.5 Strategic Focus Area 4: Mobilise evidence for action

Overview

The strategic focus area aims for the NDRP Research Agenda to help shape policies and practices. The pathway to impact for this focus area is shown in Figure 3.10.

Figure 3.10 Pathway to impact – Mobilise evidence for action



Note: Specific outcomes per stage are outlined in Appendix C.

Source: ACIL Allen

The NDRP has **influenced** the sector through its promotion and distribution of research. The NDRP has consolidated research, delivered knowledge exchange and mobilisation events, distributed research, and formed the basis of a network of researchers. Through this, research has become more accessible, and stakeholders are accessing and utilising research more. The translation into transformational impact on policy and practice will take time, though the NDRP's activities have provided a solid footing. It is important to note that this strategic focus area is dependent on the participation and willingness of its partners, and that without joint effort and collaboration its impact will be limited.

Key activities relevant to this strategic focus area include:

— consolidating disability research
— delivering knowledge exchange and mobilisation
— distributing research through its website and newsletter
— building the basis for a network of researchers through its partnerships.

[74] Department of Health, Disability and Ageing, Reducing Health Inequities Mission Expert Advisory Panel, Reducing Health Inequities Mission Expert Advisory Panel | Australian Government Department of Health, Disability and Ageing, accessed 14 July 2024.

Mechanisms to share knowledge

The NDRP improves the sharing of knowledge and encourages awareness of research throughout all of its functions. The NDRP has a notable number of subscribers to its newsletter (3,332). The newsletter is used to registrations to its activities, as well as promote and share information and research through its newsletter.

The NDRP's significant media and web attention (outlined in Section 3.2) promotes disability-led research and brings attention to its research and that which it has collated.

The NDRP's direct engagements and partnerships create the foundation for its brokering and enabler role, which will allow it to facilitate partnerships and connections in the sector that promote research translation in the long-term.

Knowledge exchange facilitation

The NDRP has made research more accessible and usable through its activities. It has worked to consolidate research into a single location through its Disability Research Collection, then promoting knowledge exchange and mobilisation through its Evidence to Action events, and distributed research through its newsletter and website.

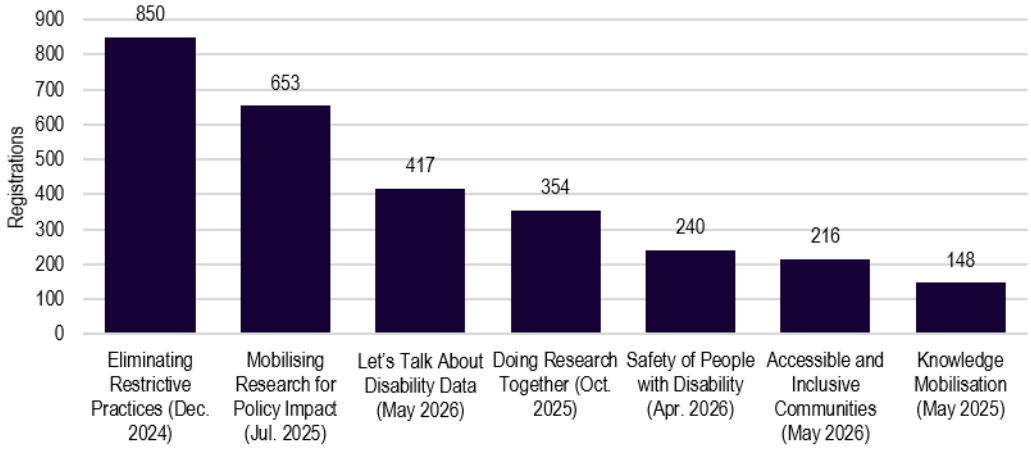
The NDRP has made existing disability research more accessible through consolidation into a single location. The NDRP's Disability Research Collection, delivered in partnership with Australian Policy Online (APO),[75] shares evidence and knowledge on a range of topics for people with disability and their families and carers, policy makers, researchers, advocates, service providers and practitioners. This resource is available publicly and is organised to promote practice such as disability-led research, specific topics relating to the NDRP Research Agenda, as well as intersectional perspectives. The collection has had significant attention: from May 2024 to June 2026, it received 97,578 views and 40,198 downloads across 49,556 unique users.

Knowledge exchange and mobilisation

The NDRP has delivered a number of sizeable and successful events. To date, 7 Evidence to Action events have been held with 2,878 registrations, focusing on topics including disability data, safety, supporting inclusive and collaborative research partnerships, mobilising research and evidence for policy impact and eliminating restrictive practices.[76] Registrations gained attendance from stakeholders across both government (19%) and researchers (16%). Events were reported to be high quality, with attendees rating them at an average of 4.5/5 in NDRP surveys (256 respondents). A breakdown of registrations, attendance, and quality rating by event is in Appendix F.3.

[75] Australian Policy Online, Disability Research Collection, Accessed 30 June 2026, from Disability Research Collection | APO
[76] NDRP. *Evidence to Action.* Accessed June 2026: https://www.ndrp.org.au/resources/evidence-to-action

Figure 3.11 Evidence-to-Action event registrations



Source: NDRP Survey, analysis by ACIL Allen.

The Evidence to Action series has been well-received by government stakeholders and represents a key opportunity for translation into policy. Government stakeholders stated that they have been involved in the development of the Evidence to Action series to ensure alignment with policy objectives. The recent event on disability data was very well-received for addressing an important gap in the sector.

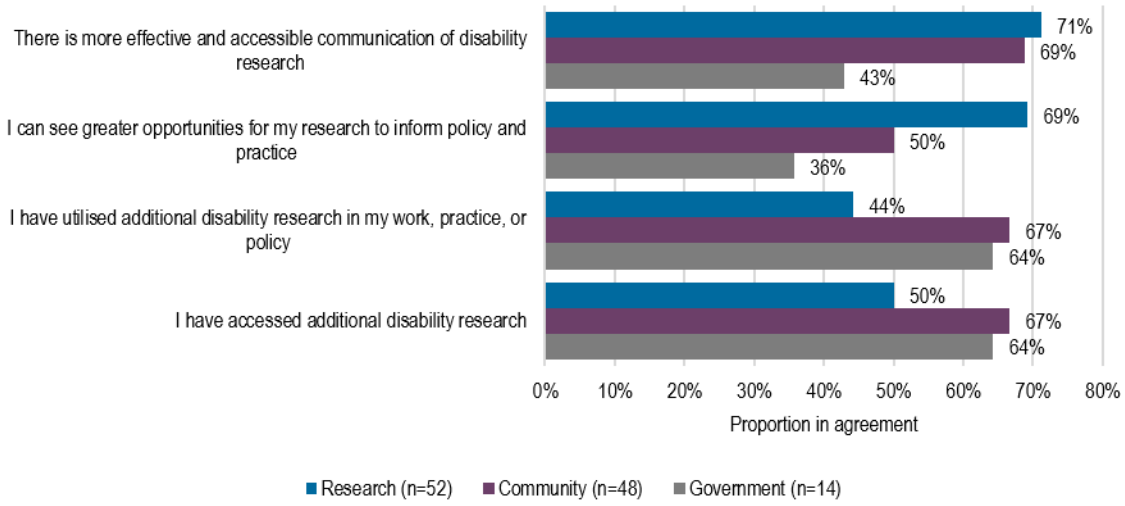
The NDRP has also established a network of researchers with disability, which it plans to make into a public resource to promote research utilisation and partnerships. This public resource will build on the NDRP's network by mapping interest, expertise, and partnership readiness across the disability research ecosystem. This will create a searchable database of disability-inclusive researchers and expertise to support research funding, partnerships, and commissioned research. Implementation is expected to be staged through 2026.

Research accessibility and utilisation

The NDRP is having a clear impact on making research more accessible and utilised, though more so with community stakeholders than others (Figure 3.12). A strong majority of research and community stakeholders believed there was more effective and accessible research as a result of the NDRP (~70%), while only half of government stakeholders reported the same. This likely results from tensions around the timing of research, where government is seeking faster outputs and translation.

Experiences were uneven across stakeholders. Research stakeholders saw the most opportunity to inform policy and practice, with less utilisation and access of research in their work. Community stakeholders reported the opposite, with most reporting additional utilisation and access of research, but only half reporting they saw additional opportunities to inform policy and practice. Government stakeholders had a similar pattern to community stakeholders, though to a lesser extent and the least of all 3 across all impact areas.

Figure 3.12 Stakeholder agreement that the NDRP promotes research communication, accessibility, and policy impact



Source: NDRP Survey, analysis by ACIL Allen.

These results are to be expected given research translation is a long-term exercise. Government stakeholders reported NDRP is not fully connected with policy but did note that Round 1 findings have not been published yet which may be affecting perceptions of effectiveness. This outlines a challenge for the NDRP in that the speed at which policy makers need advice can be faster than the time required to do proper co-design and inclusive research. The NDRP is not yet behind here, given research projects were first funded in 2025 – analysis of ARC-funded research shows that the average time taken to realise benefits or impacts from research after project completion is 5.6 years for basic research, and 4.2 years for applied research.[77]

> *"When providing advice on a fast-moving agenda, we need that evidence and we need it quickly and tangible ways that we can grab and put into briefings. We don't have time to do big research; we need a trustworthy and independent source." (Government stakeholder)*

Researchers also noted that it can be challenging to engage policy makers, given the rapid turnover of staff in departments.

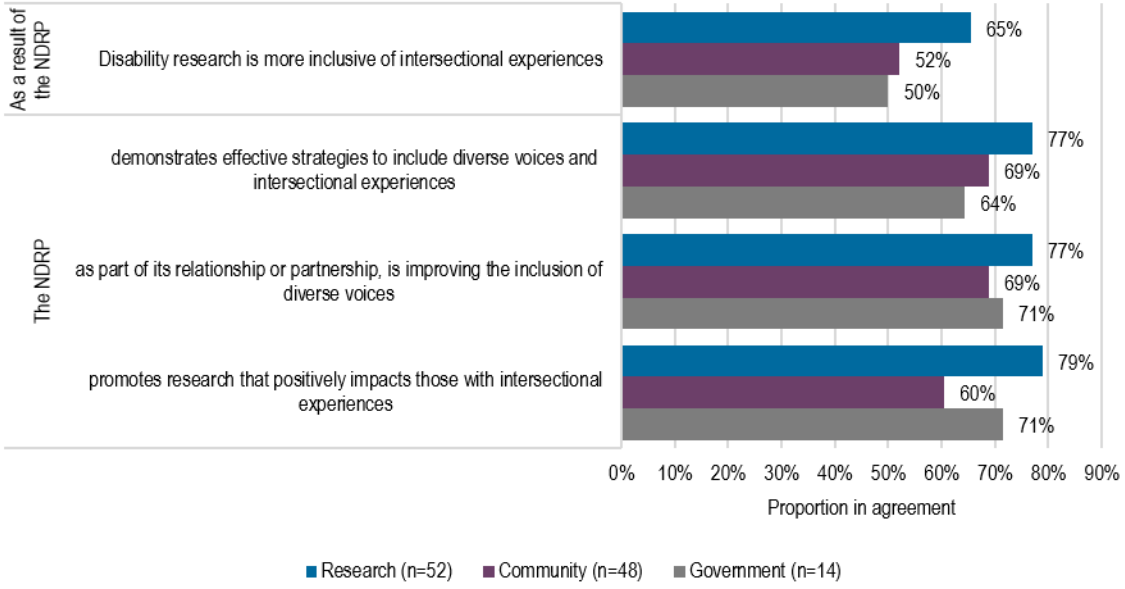
> *"Through the NDRP practices, we have tried to involve policy makers in all our research now, but the turnover in policy makers is rapid. One project, so many different people in that role, movement from policy side in terms of merging departments, makes it hard, research need and policy need is constantly changing, research takes time. Often, what they are saying we have been saying for 10 years, consistent advocacy message, something else comes up and takes priority, its challenging, other competing priorities on policy side." (Research applicant)*

[77] ACIL Allen. (2023). *Impact assessment of ARC-funded research: final technical supplement.* Australian Research Council. Accessed June 2026: https://apo.org.au/node/324101.

3.6 Adjacent benefits: Benefiting target groups and priority cohorts

Though not a strategic focus area, stakeholders reported that the NDRP has a clear practice in supporting diverse voices and promoting intersectional research (Figure 3.13). The NDRP Easy Read survey respondents reported that the NDRP brings different groups together (100%, n=7). Most agreed that the NDRP demonstrates effective strategies to include diverse voices and intersectional experiences, improves the inclusion of diverse voices, and promotes intersectional research. This, however, hasn't translated to overall impact on disability research being more inclusive of intersectional experiences, reflecting the long-term systemic barriers.

Figure 3.13 Stakeholder agreement that the NDRP promotes intersectional experiences and diverse voices



Source: NDRP Survey, analysis by ACIL Allen.

The NDRP has clear engagement with people with lived experience of living with disability through its research funding, community engagement, and Evidence-to-Action events, though there has been a lesser engagement with First Nations (a more detailed breakdown is available in the appendix). It should be noted, however, that the NDRP's activities don't track participation data for other priority cohorts: diverse cultural backgrounds, gender, rural and remote communities, and LGBTQIA+.

The NDRP's research funding has clearly supported intersectional research. As part of Round 1, a series of research projects were funded focusing on First Nations, CALD, Gender, LGBTQIA+, and children and young people with disability.

- First Nations
  - "Culturally grounded safety for First Nations women with disability"
  - "Barriers Within Bars: Indigenous people with disability in prison"
- CALD
  - "Building culturally safe support for refugee communities" focusing on people with disability from Karen and Afghan Hazara refugee backgrounds in regional Victoria
  - "Safety for CALD communities in Aged Care"

- Gender and LGBTQIA+
  - "Pleasure-centred sexual safety for neurodivergent people" focusing on neurodivergent women, trans and gender-diverse people
- Children and young people
  - "Sometimes I'm too safe: Exploring the dignity of risk" focusing on young adults with intellectual disability
  - "Psychological safety for children with behaviours of concern"
  - "Family violence in families of children with disability in Australia"

These build on a history of funding intersectional research set in the pilot funding delivered in 2022 which included projects focusing on First Nations NDIS participants, mothers, people with disability from refugee backgrounds, LGBTQIA+ people with intellectual disability, and children and young people.

There are tensions in the sector concerning prioritisation of intersectional research over addressing universal gaps in the evidence base. Some stakeholders felt that intersectional research should be a focus as the disability community experience is highly diverse and that people with disability experience multiple and compounding forms of disadvantage. Others, most often in government roles, reflected on the dearth of foundational research in the space which was seen as a greater priority.

> *"If gold standard, research should always look at intersectionality, it highlights underlying inequities in addition to social determinants. First Nations have much higher proportion of disability compared to non-First Nations communities. How can you not apply an intersectional lens, when there are so many different populations within the disability community." (Research applicant)*

> *"Coming round to LGBTQIA+ people with disability, the evidence is 40% of queer people live with disability and that isn't reflected in the research approach. There is a risk that intersectional groups just drop out of focus more easily than others. That is something that a focused NDRP can do is respond to the gaps in research. Coming from an advocacy background there are many gaps in research, we need representative data to back up things we know." (DRO representative)*

> *"In the NDRP, the focus on having voices of different intersectionalities, I'm First Nations. I find in policy and disability research it's very hard to amplify the voices of lived experience and I love that the NDRP champions that and has representation from many members of our community." (DRLP participant)*

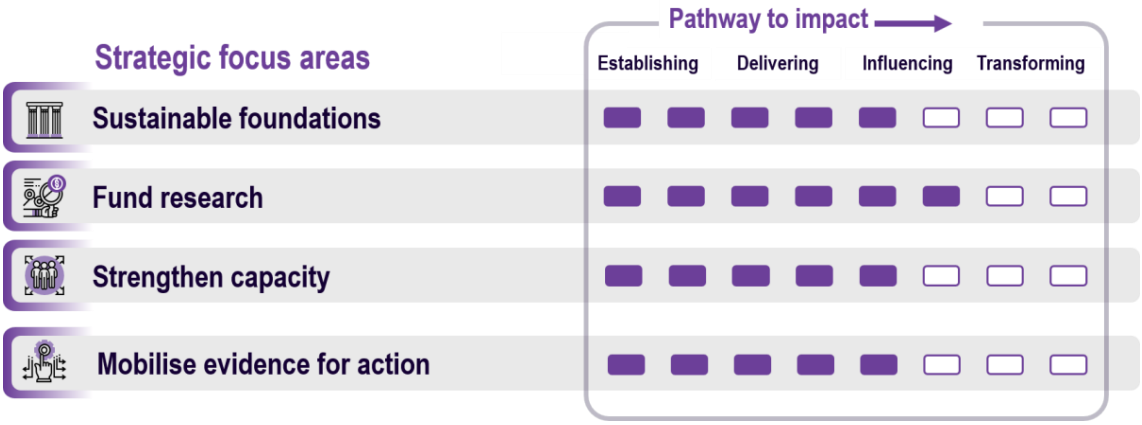
The NDRP has recognised these challenges and is making steps to balance competing priorities. As an example, the CRP evolved the approach for First Nations researchers, after applications for the focus groups were initially low. The MOU with Girra Maa will support a First Nations commissioning model to better meet their needs.

3.7 Summary

The NDRP has shown that it can deliver on its ambitious vision to transform policy and practice in Australia through disability-led research. Though it is a small organisation and only 2 years into its first work phase, the NDRP has successfully mobilised the organisation, built foundational trust and respect, delivered disability-led and policy-relevant research, improved research capacity and capability, and made research more accessible, usable, and impactful.

The NDRP has made significant progress along its pathway to impact across its strategic focus areas (Figure 3.14). In all its delivered activities it has shown early signs of influence and impact.

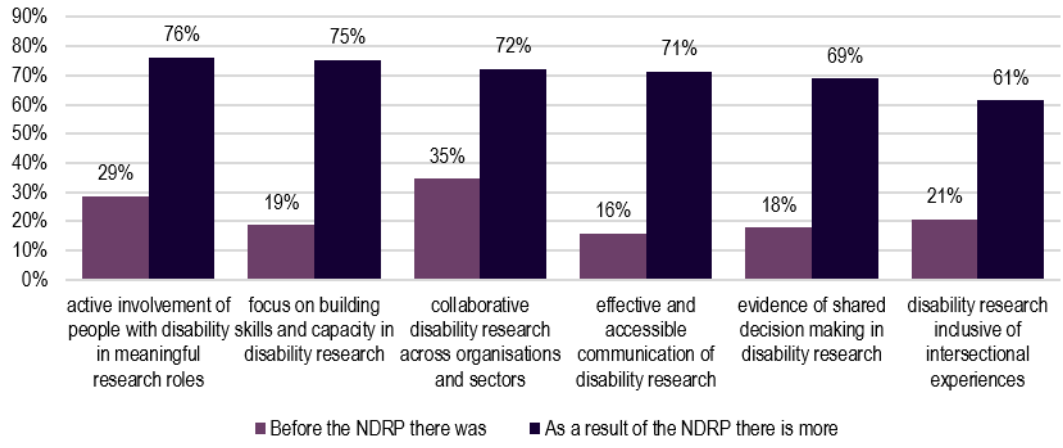
Figure 3.14 NDRP Pathway to impact assessment summary



Source: ACIL Allen

The NDRP has asserted itself as an enabler at the nexus between researchers, community, and government, one that exemplifies best practice in the sector and is well trusted. The response from stakeholders has been emphatic: the NDRP is necessary, and it is doing the right things in the right way. In so doing, the NDRP is filling gaps in the sector (Figure 3.15)

Figure 3.15 NDRP impacts in areas of need



Source: NDRP Survey, analysis by ACIL Allen

4 Efficiency, value for money and sustainability

This chapter examines the NDRP's efficiency through delivery of activities and value-for-money, considering enablers and barriers.

4.1 Efficiency

Delivery on time and budget

The NDRP has made strong progress in delivering planned activities, which are aligned to the strategic focus areas and the objects for the organisation set out in the Grant Opportunity Guidelines.[78] Almost all activities committed to in the NDRP's Activity Work Plan were delivered on time, are currently on track, or planned for the future (Table 4.1). Where activities have been delayed (such as fellowships, scholarships, and mentorship supports), this is largely driven by the lack of available resourcing. The NDRP is a small organisation servicing a wide-rage portfolio of work, which means priorities must be balanced carefully. Delivering on the Guiding Principles is also time and effort intensive, given the level of activity required to support true collaboration, co-design and inclusion.

Table 4.1 NDRP's progress in delivering core activities

Strategic focus area	On track	Completed	Planned	Delayed
1. Build a sustainable foundation	83%	17%	0%	0%
2. Fund research done by and with people with disability	44%	31%	19%	6%
3. Strengthen disability research capacity	58%	4%	13%	25%
4. Mobilise evidence for action	81%	19%	0%	0%

Note: Status is as of January 2026, with an update to Round 2 research funding delays.

Source: NDRP Activity Work Plan

Funding breakdown

A full cost effectiveness analysis has not been completed given the early stage of the NDRP's establishment and operation.

Through a model of significant upfront funding, the NDRP's total grant income is supplemented by interest earned on Term Deposits. This contributes an additional $1,186,412 to the total grant income (Table 4.2 Interest on Term Deposits) and allows the NDRP to utilise interest for further impact. This model follows that of the Medical Research Future Fund (MRFF) whereby the net interest from the fund pays for important health and medical research projects.[79]

[78] Department of Social Services (2024) Community Grants Hub *Disability and Carers Program Implementation of the National Disability Research Partnership Grant Opportunity Guidelines.*

[79] Department of Health, Disability, and Ageing, (n.d.), About the MRFF, accessed July 2026 from https://www.health.gov.au/our-work/mrff/about?language=en.

Table 4.2 Interest on Term Deposits

Income	Value
Total grant funding with indexation	**$13,974,543**
Total interest FY 2024/25 - actual	$375,946
Total Interest FY 2025/26 - actual	$495,099
Estimated interest for FY 2026/27	$294,825
Estimated interest for FY 2027/28	$ 20,542
Total interest (actual and estimated)	**$1,186,412**

Source: ACIL Allen analysis of NDRP data

Financial data indicate that the NDRP is being delivered with limited administrative overheads. Its direct administrative expenses are 24.5% of the overall budget, within a cap of 25% for secretariat expenses (Table 4.3). However, the nature of the organisation's delivery model requires additional research administrative costs which are also detailed in Table 4.3. Research administration costs reflect the volume of applications for the NDRP's funding and will likely vary into the future depending on demand. There is a need to fully capture these direct research costs to plan for future resources and sustainability, especially in anticipation of future demand.

Table 4.3 Activities funded out of administrative costs

Activity	Total balance of grant funding	% of overall grant funding including estimated interest
Research administrative expenses		
Other research administration and delivery costs	$744,507.19	5.0%
Design costs	$17,892.50	0.1%
Accessibility costs	$370,226.34	2.4%
Committee expenses including independent review of grants	$286,236.01	1.9%
Lived Experience Involvement	$125,705.87	0.8%
Event expenses	$41,354.43	0.3%
Database of researchers	$27,186.60	0.2%
Sub total		**10.6%**
Direct administrative expenses		
Employment expenses	$2,650,998.00	17.4%
Board Expenses	$457,736.00	3.0%
All other administrative expenses	$607,576.13	4.0%
Sub total		**24.4%**
TOTAL		**35%**

Note: Spend is actual until June 2026 and projected until end of grant funding.

Source: NDRP financial data, analysis by ACIL Allen.

Cost of disability-led and inclusive practice

The NDRP's key value-add is its approach to accessibility, lived experience, and being disability-led. Undertaking accessible, disability-led activities is more expensive than business-as-usual activities for similar organisations. However, these activities are essential to the NDRP's value offering and the achievement of objectives. These are not an optional expense for the NDRP as they are necessary to engage and support full participation of people with disability in research.

Delivering the Guiding Principles with integrity has incurred the following costs (2025-26 Financial Year with forecasts for May and June):

- Accessibility: $161,233.34 (services such as captioning, Auslan interpreters, the development of EasyRead documents, and any other accommodations required for people with disability)
- Lived experience involvement: $43,230.87 (services such as reimbursement for time).

Lived experience contribution of the NDRP may be underestimated through current reporting. Lived experience is integrated in all of the NDRP's activities. For example, the NDRP has members of its staff and Board with lived experience of disability, which may not fall under this line item. Additionally, some people with lived experience may choose not to submit invoices for their involvement which would then not be captured in the financials. This highlights that while there are known costs associated with delivering the NDRP's work, there are additional costs which may be less tangible or clearly quantified through financial reporting.

Efficiency in scale

The NDRP has demonstrated efficiency in its approach by scaling activities in relation to demand. For example, the organisation expanded its funding offering from 8 to 15 projects for Round 1 after a higher-than-expected demand. This meant there was a success rate of 16% for Round 1 applications.

This is higher than the success rate of the NHMRC's research grants, some of which have shown a success rate of less than 10%.[80] A higher success rate means that the time invested by applicants in preparing an application, and by the NDRP in assessing these applications, was more efficient. However, with increasing demand in Round 2, the success rate is likely to be lower (estimated 11%). As outlined earlier, for the 2026 research funding round there were 176 applications requesting $46 million research funding against a funding envelope of $5 million. Here the NDRP is constrained by funding available. There are already signs that further value could be realised through more disability led research to support government's policy objectives and Australia's Disability Strategy.

The NDRP has also shown efficiency by scaling capability building by responding to demand. Places for the DRLP were expanded from its original offering to 14 in response to high demand and high-quality applications. The Citizen Researcher micro-credentials course through Griffith University was instituted to offer broader capability-building training in response to demand, with 150 participants in total. Offers for these places were adapted to organisational need, where a set of organisations working with young people expressed a keen interest, and the NDRP was able to expand the number of places available accordingly.

> *"We told NDRP we had more people than expected interested in the course, if they were willing to extend. They said yes, we had 8 people rather than 4 people who they were giving the opportunity… directly impacting people with lived experience." (DRO Representative)*

[80] Research Professional News. (2026) *Success rate for NHMRC Ideas Grants dips below 10 per cent.* Accessed June 2026: https://www.researchprofessionalnews.com/rr-news-australia-government-agencies-2026-1-success-rate-for-nhmrc-ideas-grants-dips-below-10-per-cent/.

Funding sources

The NDRP has met its requirements for current funding under DHDA, and established foundational contacts with state and territory governments, as well as the philanthropic peak body, as a basis for future funding streams. However, it has yet to diversify its funding through these streams. This is expected in part due to the time it takes to establish these partnerships, as well as the initial focus on the NDRP's core funded activities.

4.2 Value for money

Comparisons to similar organisations

Assessing the value for money provided by the NDRP is complex. The NDRP is a relatively unique organisation given the breadth of functions supported. The NDRP offers additional functions beyond grant funding which are contained within its costs. This includes research capacity development, partnership and collaboration, and research translation and mobilisation.

In addition, there is limited publicly available data on similar organisations' financials. Few organisations provide information on their research inputs and costs which enable a measurement of efficiency.[81] Though comparable organisations publish their revenue and expenses, few provide detail on funding directed towards specific activities or enabling functions.

There is inconsistency in the way that organisations report their financial expenses. This makes it difficult to compare the costs of the NDRP with other organisations, as specific comparisons to organisational spending on enabling functions such as translation and dissemination of research are not available. For example, the Black Dog Institute reports its overall spending on 'research trials, program development and dissemination',[82] but this is not broken down further to allow direct comparisons to the NDRP's knowledge translation and mobilisation activities such as Evidence to Action.

Evidence translation and knowledge mobilisation organisation such as ANROWS and AERO do not publicly provide detailed comparable reporting on their costs.

For the research sector overall, there are high indirect costs associated with undertaking research. The Association of Australian Medical Research Institutes (AAMRI) estimates that for every $1 of research grants spent on medical research, 64 cents[83] are needed to cover indirect research costs across such as administration, IT, cyber security, legal costs, human resources, procurement, technology, data storage, commercialisation and facilities.[84] Although this estimate was based on medical or scientific research which may include some indirect costs which are less relevant to the NDRP such as specialised scientific equipment, most indirect costs were attributed to core support services around administration, operation and promotion or communications. For every $1 of grant funding the NDRP funds, it spends 23 cents in research administrative expenses. This places it at a good standard of efficiency.

[81] Australian National Audit Office. (2026). *Performance Statements of Major Australian Government Entities — Outcomes from the 2024–25 Audit Program.*

[82] Black Dog Institute. (2024). *Annual Report 2023-24.*

[83] This estimate was provided in 2023 Australian dollar values.

[84] Association of Australian Medical Research Institutes. (2024). *2024 AARMI Report – Representing and benchmarking Australia's medical research sector.*

Stakeholder perceptions

Stakeholders across government, DROs and researchers were highly supportive of the value for money provided by the NDRP. The NDRP's focus on lived experience and co-design was seen to contribute significant value as a differentiating factor, particularly when compared to other research funders. This is valued by stakeholders, as it results in more genuine partnerships and involvement of people with lived experience, which is critical in ensuring that the needs and interests of people with disability are understood and addressed.

> *"One of the things NDRP has done, given a drive to the academic and university spaces, to actually want to have to work with us, the expectation built on them to work with lived experience organisations like ours has been an effective driver, I can only see that continuing to build." (DRO representative)*

The NDRP's focus on leading accessible research practice was seen to contribute significant value for money for the sector. The NDRP was perceived as demonstrating best practice through their work, such as through accessible communication in meetings and correspondence. The funding commitment provided for accessibility supports for researchers was valued, as it meant that people with disability could fully participate in events such as conferences. This also reduces barriers for people with disability to build their experience and capabilities in research, likely leading to significant improvements for individuals.

> *"I didn't think I was particularly slouch in best practice, but just in these sessions, saying who is speaking, where substantive text ends, are all things that I've learned…The practice is modelled and I can then model it." (Researcher)*

> *"They sent one of our lived experience researchers to [a conference] and funded their communication guide and interpreter, that level of funding support is rare, NDRP's commitment to access and inclusion, they walk the talk, it was great for them to have that opportunity." (Researcher)*

4.3 Sustainability

The immediate sustainability of the NDRP is dependent on it being sufficiently funded to deliver on the established work program. As with any small organisation servicing a large portfolio, there are risks of staff burnout which may compromise immediate sustainability. The NDRP delivers $808,750.00 worth of grant funding per staff member, noting that only one out of 8 staff members are full-time. This is a large level of effort for a small team, given the NDRP delivers more than grant funding.

Among stakeholders consulted, there was a perceived risk of staff burnout at the NDRP as a result of resourcing, noting the critical role of staff members in driving the achievement of objectives.

> *"I don't know if they have guaranteed funding beyond next year, that raises risks. The importance of the staff at NDRP, if they're not guaranteed with lead in time about extra funding, that can result in staff leaving, which could erode the organisation." (Researcher)*

For longer term sustainability, the NDRP requires sufficient core or 'backbone' funding to continue operations. Other comparable organisations such as ANROWS, AERO, and Black Dog Institute receive most of their revenue through government funding, but they also draw on other funding sources such as investments, philanthropy, and community fundraising.[85]

The NDRP is yet to activate additional funding streams. This is expected at this stage given the focus on mobilising the organisation and establishing foundations. However, the NDRP has begun exploring options around fixed-term investments where interest could be used to support and expand its work.

[85] Australia's National Research Organisation for Women's Safety. (2025). *Annual Report 2024-25*; Australian Education Research Organisation. (2025). *Australian Education Research Organisation Annual Report 2025*; Black Dog Institute. (2024). *Annual Report 2023-24.*

In Financial Year 2025-26, the NDRP was projected to gain an additional $441,322 through interest which could be re-distributed into its operations.

A lack of diversified funding may be a risk to the NDRP's long-term sustainability, though there are also costs and risks associated with alternative funding models. A core strength of the NDRP's design is its independence, and it is possible that alternative funders may constrain this independence as a result of their own priorities. Seeking funding through alternative mechanisms is also a resource-intensive activity that would require the NDRP to divert staff away from delivering the core program of work.

4.4 Factors supporting efficiency

The foundational work the NDRP has undertaken in building trust and improving processes will generate efficiency in the long term and contribute to its success and sustainability. In consultation, it was emphasised that building this trust with the disability community is critical, though this is difficult and must be undertaken carefully. The time invested by the NDRP in setting up a credible and quality approach to its engagement and funding structure will contribute to downstream efficiencies.

Additionally, the NDRP is working towards building trust as an organisation, rather than through individual people or leaders in the organisation. Gaining organisational recognition and awareness in this manner is more sustainable than relying on an individual's reputation, though it may take a longer period of time to establish.

Building trust will have long-term impacts on sustainability by increasing the credibility of the research which is disseminated and endorsed by the NDRP among stakeholders in the policy and disability support sector. If stakeholders trust the NDRP's research outputs, they are more likely to change policy and practice. It also means that the disability sector will be able to use and adapt the NDRP's best-practice approaches and established networks, creating efficiencies.

4.5 Summary

Evaluating the efficiency of the NDRP is complex and must be considerate of its fundamental aims of working in genuine partnership with people with disability, researchers and government. Delivering on the Guiding Principles takes effort that is greater than business-as-usual activities, which have contributed to historic challenges in the disability research sector.

It is necessary that the NDRP has the financial resources to support inclusion of people with disability through lived experience engagement, co-design, and inclusion. This will result in long-term efficiencies, through the development of a credible evidence base and resources which can be used in policy and practice.

The long-term sustainability of the NDRP is dependent on sufficient funding to support the organisation's objectives. The NDRP currently relies on Commonwealth funding to support its operations, and this backbone funding is likely to be required into the future. While similar organisations also receive most of their funding through governments, additional funding streams have been utilised such as investments, philanthropy or community fundraising. The NDRP is yet to explore these options, though this may be of benefit in the future to support the diversification of revenue streams and the scale of activity required.

Measuring the efficiency of the NDRP is complex, given the approach involves undertaking meaningful engagement with people with disability, building trusted relationships, and translating research into policy, which are inherently time consuming and costly. Benchmarking the NDRP's cost is challenging as there are no organisations which fulfill the same scope of activities in the disability sector. While these challenges are well understood, stakeholders were highly supportive of the approach taken by the NDRP and the scale of outputs and outcomes achieved to date.

5 Conclusions and future implications

This chapter summarises the key findings from the evaluation and explores considerations for the NDRP's future directions.

5.1 Conclusion

Clear evidence on the need for the NDRP

There has been a long history which led to the establishment of the NDRP, a history that has seen systemic and institutional barriers and discrimination undermine the meaningful inclusion of people with disability in research. The NDRP has been established to facilitate partnerships between people with disability, their families and carers, academics, peak advocacy and consumer groups, governments and services providers to drive collaborative and inclusive research. It is an integral part of the policy and strategy landscape required to improve outcomes for people with disability in Australia, with clear linkages to Australia's Disability Strategy.

The organisation operates uniquely at the interface between community, researchers and government which is inherently challenging as each of these groups has their own unique needs, incentives and timeframes. Despite this, the NDRP has had remarkable success across its first 2 years of operation. There is a significant level of satisfaction with not only the design, but the progress of the NDRP to date. The NDRP is widely recognised for addressing recognised gaps in the disability research landscape, with a clear logic underpinning activities, outputs and intended outcomes.

While there has been significant achievement to date, the issues the NDRP seeks to address are deeply entrenched. Resolving these systemic challenges will take significant time and effort across all stakeholders, reinforcing the ongoing need for the NDRP to continue to operate.

Significant achievements given organisational maturity

There is robust evidence of the extensive efforts from the NDRP to establishing trust among stakeholders and the return of these activities in paving the way for deeper collaboration. While this trust is an important foundation for the future success of the organisation, it should be recognised as a valuable outcome in its own right when seeking system-level change. The delivery of activities in line with the Guiding Principles has played an essential role in building respect for the NDRP, which is seen to operate with integrity and authenticity in delivering on its vision.

The NDRP has established quality and accessible systems and processes for funding research which is directly linked to outcome areas identified in the organisation's Research Agenda and Australia's Disability Strategy. The volume of applications (93 to Round 1 and 176 to Round 2) demonstrates increasing awareness of and engagement with established funding streams. The Commissioned Research has been well implemented as a genuine partnership between researchers and government. The organisation is rapidly learning and evolving, demonstrating flexibility and a genuine commitment to improving and meeting stakeholder needs. The NDRP is seen to be enabling research focused on critical issues that matter most to people with disability, which in turn contributes to trust and respect in the organisation.

The NDRP has established bespoke capability building streams through the DRLP, a CoP for Round 1 funded teams, and a new micro credential course through a partnership with Griffith University.

Stakeholders are receiving opportunities they would not have otherwise had access to, with the DRLP in particular enabling students to undertake higher degree research when previously there were too many barriers in place for them to do so. The evaluation heard firsthand accounts of how this has been life changing for recipients.

The NDRP has also begun to support improved knowledge translation. The organisation has established a partnership with the APO to deliver a Disability Research Collection, which values all knowledge sources and aims to make research accessible to the community. There are indicators of more effective and accessible communication of disability research due to the NDRP. Evidence to Action events have seen over 2,400 registrations and with very high-quality ratings for the events by those who have completed feedback surveys.

The achievements of the NDRP are significant and reflect an impressive output given the small footprint of the organisation. The NDRP is driving transformational change across research, policy and the community required to effectively enable inclusion of people with disability to increase empowerment and choice. While these signs are positive, there is work to be done to make inroads to with government stakeholders and broader institutional change with universities, funding bodies and ethics committees. This is to be expected, given the significant time taken to drive the cultural change required and the breadth of priorities the NDRP is currently servicing.

5.2 Future considerations

Long-term evaluation of the NDRP

This interim evaluation reflects a point in time assessment of the NDRP's pathway to impact. It will be important that there is sufficient time between this evaluation and any subsequent evaluation to allow for the organisation to further advance towards the level of transformational ambition that has been set. As such, it would be prudent to wait at least 2-3 years before another comprehensive evaluation of the organisation.

This evaluation had a relatively brief period available to allow for widespread stakeholder engagement. While the survey and focus group discussions have yielded rich insights to this evaluation, the evidence needs to be considered in the context of perspectives that have not been included because of the time limitations. There has been limited direct engagement with State and Territory Governments and with First Nations people. The next evaluation of the NDRP should be conducted over a longer period that includes an extended approach to stakeholder engagement allowing for a greater focus on First Nations people.

Resourcing and scale

There is an established need for the NDRP. There are critical gaps in the research landscape that the NDRP is seeking to counter, most notably the longstanding lack of meaningful involvement of people with disability. However, it takes time to properly mobilise the infrastructure, build relationships and establish trust and reputation among disparate stakeholder groups. Short term, fragmented funding models are problematic and discourage collaborations and the organisation needs longer term surety of funding that recognises the time to build foundations for long-term, transformative change.

Further government funding

While the NDRP has built solid foundations, the organisation has some way to go to expand reach and impact while achieving operational stability. However, there is a huge risk that trust will be eroded and momentum lost if the NDRP does not continue.

For long term sustainability, the NDRP may need to diversify funding streams to reduce the reliance on uncertain government funding – for example, through philanthropy, state and territory governments, and research collaborations. However, it is too early in the organisational maturity to have activated diverse funding streams. It will be essential that any alternate funding streams do not impact the independent nature of the NDRP as this is key to the success of the organisation in fostering collaborations across community, researchers and Government.

Alternate funding streams

The NDRP will need a plan for alternate funding streams, but this will need to be developed on a timeline with government that recognises the efforts required to develop and activate revenue streams. Importantly, this should not be in lieu of government funding – rather alternate funding streams may be additive or supplementary.

There is a huge weight of stakeholder expectation upon the NDRP. The longer-term outcomes for the organisation are ambitious and reflect a shared vision for systems-level change. While the NDRP is making steady progress towards impacts across each of the strategic focus areas, it is going to be challenging to shift the dial in all areas with the current resource model in the next 12 months.

Prioritisation of resources

The NDRP could seek feedback from government about balancing resourcing with the scope and scale of work to fully realise benefits within current resourcing by mid-2027. While significant achievements have been made across short term outcomes, it will be challenging for the organisation to scale up with current resources to reach longer term transformative impacts in less than 12 months across each strategic focus area.

Design

While the NDRP has built diverse and strong relationships across the disability sector, relationships across government are not as strong when compared to community and research stakeholders. This is to be expected given the complexity of levels of government and government structures, differing priorities across departments, and the relative infancy of the organisation. However, these partnerships are likely to be essential to achieving objectives in driving practice change.

Government partnerships

The NDRP may need to consider how to strengthen connections with governments across the country to build trust and credibility to levels seen across researchers and community. This may require further support from DHDA to position the NDRP as a leader for government stakeholders to connect with.

The NDRP is yet to reach notable scale in formalised partnerships outside of funded research agreements. This reflects what has been feasible with time and resources available but will need greater attention in moving toward the NDRP longer-term vision for strengthened collaboration across the sector. Stakeholders have suggested that the NDRP could look to improve brand awareness as it is becoming a more established independent leading organisation.

Brand awareness

There may be a need to grow brand awareness and extend formal partnerships, particularly in areas that intersect with disability such as health, ageing and education. Expectations need to be balanced with available resources, given the significant scale of the organisation's existing activity.

Both the independent review of Research Round 1 Funding and evaluation of the CRP identified challenges with governance and conflicts of interest due to the many roles that people can hold within disability research. This may impact the capacity of the NDRP Research Committee to be fully involved in decision making where members hold conflicts in relation to funding applications.

Governance

The role of the Research Committee may not be fully active in the governance of key funding decisions when there are conflicts of interest for members. This may need further consideration as to how the Committee can continue to operate within their Terms of Reference of the Committee in these situations.

Delivery

There are tensions among stakeholder groups on where the NDRP Research Agenda should focus, balancing between foundational evidence gaps and deep dives into intersectional experiences. While many stakeholders felt the NDRP is improving the inclusion of diverse voices, some called for greater inclusion of and attention to this including in relation to people with intellectual and communication disability, LGBTQIA+ people, culturally and linguistically diverse groups, and people from rural and regional areas.

Research priorities

It is challenging, if not impossible, to address all research needs in the current resourcing mix. There may be opportunity over time to give greater prominence to 'mainstreaming' intersectionality within research funding.

Government is seeking rapid translation of evidence to inform policy but this needs to be balanced with the time it takes to do quality, inclusive research with proper co-design. The 12-month timeframe to undertake funded research has been reported as a barrier. Evidence examined in this evaluation identified that research can often take up to 4 years from design to translation.

Timeliness of research outputs

There is a need to balance government expectations for rapid results with the time it takes to complete research. Earlier milestone outputs from research, such as literature reviews or fact sheets, may still be of value to government in the early stages. There is also an opportunity to build capacity within government to fully understand the time required to undertake meaningful co-design.

Much of the enabling work of the NDRP is not formally captured as direct research costs and the CRP model has been more resource intense than initially anticipated. As part of future resource planning and as a recognised leader in this area, there is an opportunity to improve how costing is included in both internal NDRP operations and administration but also to provide guidance for others as to how to fully cost meaningful co-design and inclusion.

Research costing

There is a need to fully capture direct research costs to plan for future resources and sustainability. Over time this could evolve into advice that the NDRP could share more widely to support others to plan sufficient resourcing and time within budgets and plans.

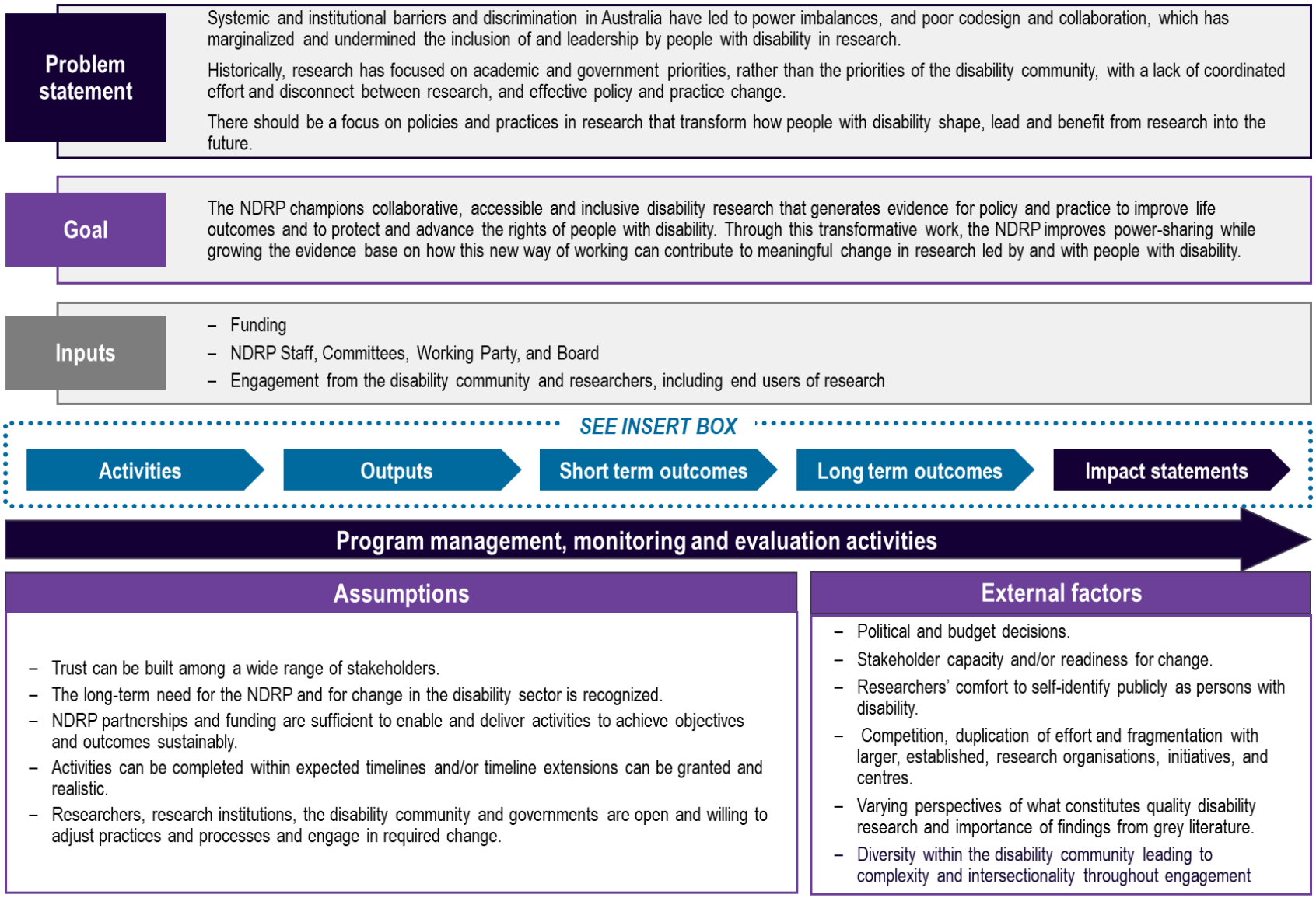
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Appendices

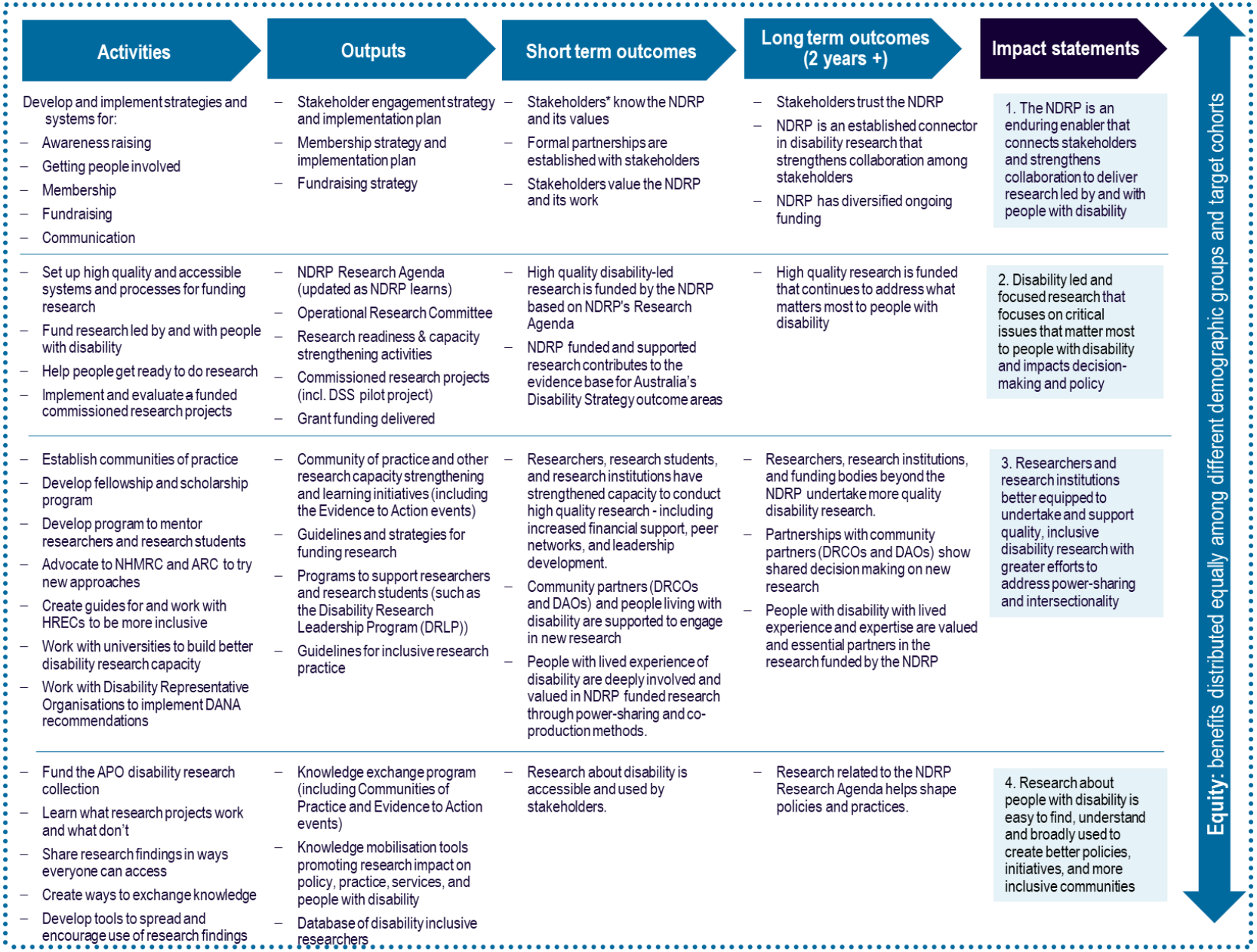
A Program Logic

This appendix contains the program logic for the NDRP

Figure A.1 NDRP Program Logic (2026 update)



** Stakeholders, unless otherwise specified throughout, include the disability community and their organisations, researchers, universities, institutions, governments, policy makers, and funders.*



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B Evaluation Framework

Table B.1 Evaluation Framework

Key Evaluation Questions (KEQs)	Indicators
Appropriateness & Justification – What would have happened without the NDRP?	
KEQ 1 – What is the need that the NDRP seeks to address?	– Nature of the opportunity or need – Alignment with stakeholders'* needs – Alignment with Australian Government's strategic policy objectives, including Australia's Disability Strategy – Extent of continuing need for intervention
KEQ 2 – To what extent does the design of the NDRP meet the identified need?	– Alignment of NDRP design with needs and objectives[86] – Strength of the links between intended activities, outputs and outcomes – Design changes since inception, and rationale for the changes – Stakeholder* satisfaction with design
KEQ 3 – Counterfactual: what additional benefit does the NDRP have over other approaches, and why would a future with it be better than one without it?	– Benefits of the selected approach over other possible approaches to addressing the identified need – The prospective value of this future with the NDRP, as opposed to a future without it
Effectiveness/Impact – To what extent has the NDRP delivered along its pathway to impact?	
KEQ 4 – To what extent has the NDRP been delivered as intended?	– Alignment between planned and delivered activities – Alignment between planned and delivered outputs
KEQ 5 – To what extent has the NDRP been delivered in line with its Guiding Principles and Strategic Plan?	– Alignment of activities with NDRP Guiding Principles – Stakeholder* satisfaction with delivery in line with the NDRP Guiding Principles – Alignment of activities with NDRP Strategic Plan
KEQ 6 – To what extent has the NDRP become an enduring enabler that connects stakeholders* and strengthens collaboration to deliver research led by and with people with disability?	– Extent of NDRP stakeholder* reach (and who has not been reached) – Stakeholder* awareness and trust in the NDRP and its values – Satisfaction of partners – Increased connection and collaboration among stakeholders* – Impact of connection and collaboration on stakeholders* – Diversity of funding sources

[86] As articulated in the Program Logic and the NDRP Strategic Plan

Key Evaluation Questions (KEQs)	Indicators

KEQ 7 – To what extent has the NDRP delivered disability led and focused research on critical issues that matter most to people with disability and impacted decision making and policy?	– Deliver critical research that matters most to people with disability:
	  – Number and size of research projects funded
	  – NDRP funded research alignment with the NDRP Research Agenda
	  – Quality of NDRP research projects
	  – Stakeholder satisfaction with research funding areas
	  – Proportion of newly funded (not having received research funding before) researchers
	  – Meaningful involvement of people with disability in research (payment for their involvement, meaningful roles, and power sharing)
	  – Changes between Rounds 1 and 2 of research funding
	– Informs Australian disability policy and practice:
	  – Contribution to evidence base for Australia's Disability Strategy outcome areas
	  – Contribution to Australia's disability policy and practice

KEQ 8 – To what extent has the NDRP research about people with disability easy to find and understand?	– Stakeholder* reports of NDRP research accessibility – Reference to NDRP research in public policy, reports, research, guidelines, and conferences

KEQ 9 – To what extent has the NDRP benefited different demographic groups and priority cohorts from the research, including participation, leadership, and outcomes?	– Extent to which different disability types, demographic groups and target cohorts have:
	  – been funded by the NDRP
	  – led research
	  – participated in research
	  – received positive impact from research
	  – received value from the NDRP
	– Demographic groups and priority cohorts may include: First Nations, diverse cultural backgrounds, gender, rural and remote communities, and LGBTQIA+
	– NDRP strategies for managing diversity, intersectionality, and power sharing/dynamics throughout its activities

KEQ 10 – To what extent has the NDRP improved researchers and research institutions' ability to undertake and support quality, inclusive disability research?	– Engagement with and impact of scholarships and fellowships – Improvement of capacity of researchers, research students, research institutions, and disability community partners to conduct and engage with high quality research – including increased financial support, peer networks, and leadership development – Improvement of capacity of researchers, research students, research institutions, and disability community partners to conduct and engage with research that is relevant and impactful to the policy landscape
KEQ 11 – What does the NDRP's stakeholders* value about the NDRP's role and work?	– Stakeholder* value derived from the NDRP

Key Evaluation Questions (KEQs)	Indicators
Efficiency – To what extent did the NDRP provide value for-money?	
KEQ 12 – How efficiently and sustainably did the NDRP operate?	– Extent to which activities were delivered as planned and within budget – Areas of unnecessary duplication of effort or resources – Proportion of funding spent on administrative purposes as opposed to delivery and research funding
KEQ 13 – How does the NDRP's costs relate to the value-add it provides?	– Extent of costs incurred with NDRP's value-add activities and approach (e.g. promoting disability-led research and increased engagement with lived experience) – Stakeholder* and systemic impact of value-add activities – Benchmarks and comparisons against similar value-add activities
Future Funding and Improvements – In what ways might the NDRP strengthen its capacity to reach the desired impacts?	
KEQ 14 – What changes do the NDRP's stakeholders* want to see?	– Stakeholder* reports of enablers, barriers, and potential improvements
KEQ 15 – What efficiencies are gained over time or with additional funding? What changes could be made to improve the NDRP's effectiveness or efficiency?	– Evidence of improvements or efficiency over time, such as between Rounds 1 and 2 of research funding – Factors supporting NDRP success and extent to which these were leveraged – Factors hindering NDRP success and extent to which these were mitigated – Other lessons to enhance NDRP design, delivery efficiency, outcome achievement or sustainability – Efficiencies over time or with additional funding – Prospect for diversity of funding sources into the future

Note: * Stakeholders - people with disability and other stakeholders' groups (DPOs/DROs, researchers, universities, institutions, governments (including both Australian government and state and territory government institutions), policy makers, and funders)

Source: ACIL Allen

C Pathway to Impact

This appendix describes the pathway to impact for each strategic focus area and its alignment with the program logic description.

C.1 Build a sustainable foundation

Rating	Program logic description
Continuum stage – where the activity stream sits on the pathway to impact	
Establish awareness, involvement, and fundraising	Develop and implement strategies and systems for: – awareness raising – getting people involved – membership – fundraising – communication.
Deliver stakeholder engagement and engaging in partnerships and memberships	– Stakeholder engagement strategy and implementation plan – Membership strategy and implementation plan – Fundraising strategy
Influence the sector through the knowledge of the NDRP and its values, value of the NDRP as an organisation and its research, and formalised partnerships	– Stakeholders* know the NDRP and its values – Formal partnerships are established with stakeholders – Stakeholders value the NDRP and its work
Transform the sector's connection and collaboration through the NDRP's role as an established and enduring connector	The NDRP is an enduring enabler that connects stakeholders and strengthens collaboration to deliver research led by and with people with disability: – Stakeholders trust the NDRP. – NDRP is an established connector in disability research that strengthens collaboration among stakeholders. – NDRP has diversified ongoing funding.

C.2 Fund research done by and with people with disability

Rating	Program logic description
Continuum stage – where the activity stream sits on the pathway to impact	
Establish high quality and accessible systems, processes to support researchers, and review and delivery processes for competitive and commissioned funding	– Set up high quality and accessible systems and processes for funding research – Fund research led by and with people with disability – Help people get ready to do research – Implement and evaluate a funded commissioned research project
Deliver funding and research that aligns with the NDRP research agenda, and activities to enable research readiness and capacity	– NDRP Research Agenda (updated as NDRP learns) – Operational Research Committee – Research readiness & capacity strengthening activities – Commissioned research projects (incl. DSS pilot project) – Grant funding delivered
Influence the sector through the development of high-quality disability-led research that aligns with the ADS outcome areas	– High quality disability-led research is funded by the NDRP based on NDRP's Research Agenda – NDRP funded and supported research contributes to the evidence base for Australia's Disability Strategy outcome areas
Transform the sector through the broad adoption and delivery of disability-led and focused research that is high quality and addresses what matters most to community and impacts decision-making and policy	Disability led and focused research that focuses on critical issues that matter most to people with disability and impacts decision-making and policy: – High quality research is funded that continues to address what matters most to people with disability. – High quality research is funded that continues to impact decision-making and policy.

C.3 Strengthen disability research capacity

Rating	Program logic description
Continuum stage – where the activity stream sits on the pathway to impact	
Establish direct capability-building activities such as fellowships, scholarships, mentorship, and communities of practice, contact organisations to improve capability, and begin advocacy for systemic enablers (such as ethics and funding approaches)	– Establish communities of practice – Develop fellowship and scholarship program – Develop program to mentor researchers and research students – Advocate to NHMRC and ARC to try new approaches – Create guides for and work with HRECs to be more inclusive – Work with universities to build better disability research capacity – Work with Disability Representative Organisations to implement Disability Advocacy Network Australia recommendations
Deliver capacity strengthening activities and provide guidelines for inclusive research practice	– Community of practice and other research capacity strengthening and learning initiatives (including the Evidence to Action events) – Guidelines and strategies for funding research – Programs to support researchers and research students (such as the Disability Research Leadership Program or DRLP) – Guidelines for inclusive research practice
Influence the sector's capability through strengthened capacity of researchers, supporting community partners to engage in new research, and deep involvement of people with lived experience of disability in NDRP funded research	– Researchers, research students, and research institutions have strengthened capacity to conduct high quality research – including increased financial support, peer networks, and leadership development – Community partners (DRCOs and DAOs) and people living with disability are supported to engage in new research – People with lived experience of disability are deeply involved and valued in NDRP funded research through power-sharing and co-production methods
Transform the sector so that people with lived experience and expertise are valued and essential partners, partnerships with community partners show shared decision-making, and more quality disability research is undertaken beyond the NDRP	Researchers and research institutions are better equipped to undertake and support quality, inclusive disability research with greater efforts to address power-sharing and intersectionality: – Researchers, research institutions, and funding bodies beyond the NDRP undertake more quality disability research. – Partnerships with community partners (DRCOs and DAOs) show shared decision making on new research. – People with disability with lived experience and expertise are valued and essential partners in the research funded by the NDRP.

C.4 Enable accessible research

Rating	Program logic description
Continuum stage – where the activity stream sits on the pathway to impact	
Establish ways to share knowledge and encourage use of research fundings, learn more about successful research projects, and consolidate disability research	– Fund the APO disability research collection – Learn what research projects work and what don't – Share research findings in ways everyone can access – Create ways to exchange knowledge – Develop tools to spread and encourage use of research findings
Deliver ways to share knowledge through knowledge exchange programs, knowledge mobilisation tools, and a database of disability-inclusive researchers	– Knowledge exchange program (including Communities of Practice and Evidence to Action events) – Knowledge mobilisation tools promoting research impact on policy, practice, services, and people with disability – Database of disability inclusive researchers
Influence the accessibility and utilisation of research by stakeholders	– Research about disability is accessible and used by stakeholders
Transform the sector so that policy and practice is redefined based on research	– Research related to the NDRP Research Agenda helps shape policies and practices.

D Alignment with Guiding Principles

This appendix summarises the alignment of activity with the Guiding Principles.

Advance high quality research that informs disability policy and practice in Australia

The NDRP has delivered activities that have advanced high quality research that informs disability policy and practice. The research the NDRP has delivered has been found to be of high quality, in line with its best-practice example and guidelines concerning co-design, disability-leadership, and power sharing. The research funded has been in line with the NDRP's research agenda, which in turn is in alignment with Australia's Disability Strategy's Outcome Areas. Work has been undertaken to establish the relationships with both community and Government that underpins the creation of relevant and supported research, especially with the commissioned and rapid policy research programs, which have a dual consultation process with Government and community. Stakeholders validate that the research delivered is in line with what matters to community, and what is relevant for Government.

Value the knowledge of people with disability in research

The NDRP has established best-practice in disability-led research and the sector looks to it for its guidelines, example, and guidance in delivering research. Stakeholders have validated the NDRP's practice as valuing the knowledge of people with disability in research and improving power sharing in research, and as a result improving the meaningful involvement of people with disability in research roles, and increased evidence of shared decision-making in research. Stakeholders reported that they look to the NDRP as high standard for work in the sector. The NDRP has also made efforts to address intersectionality and has been reported by stakeholders to promote intersectional research and improve the inclusion of diverse voices.

Strengthen disability research capacity

The NDRP has established a sizeable community of disability researchers, which it seeks to connect, support, and facilitate collaboration to improve their capability. The NDRP has engaged broadly in the sector, and received significant attention to its media, web, and events. It has created a strong network which underpins the strong demand for its other activities. It supports capability through the creation of guidelines and best-practice, which it then exemplifies throughout its activities. Stakeholders reported that their organisation improved through having to undertake the NDRP's processes. Additionally, the NDRP provides direct support through its hands-on grants funding process, providing information sessions, drop-in sessions, and feedback. It also provides direct scholarship, funding, and communities of practice to researchers and student researchers. It has plans to subsidise a micro-credential for more broad support.

Share research findings widely in useful and accessible ways

The NDRP has worked to consolidate, distribute, and mobilise research through its activities. It has worked to consolidate existing research into a single location and has utilised its broad engagement and connections to distribute research and get attention to its research. The NDRP's Evidence to Action events have attracted significant registration and attendance, which brings the community together to share knowledge and mobilise it for use in relevant policy issues.

E Survey demographics

This appendix outlines the survey demographics for the survey of the NDRP's stakeholders.

Overall, the NDRP survey sample was sizeable and robust, with good representation across the NDRP's functions, organisation types, states, experience, regionality, and time aware of the NDRP. The only limitations relate to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and gender (non-female), and government representation.

The survey received 106 respondents in total. There was positive representation across organisation types, with the exception of government:

— Responses were predominantly universities or research organisations (47%)
— DROs/DAOs/Community organisations (35%)
— with a lesser involvement from Government (18%)
— Government representation was largely federal (9%) with few state (3%) and none local.
— There were also some that responded as individuals (5%).

Organisations represented mostly those who participated in research:

— oversee/approve research (68%)
— conduct research (61%)
— participate in research (48%).

Many also promoted (39%) or informed research (16%). Few disseminated (8%) and none used for planning and policy.

Most participants had attended an NDRP event (52%) or applied for research funding (48%), with a spread amongst research teams, screening, consultations, or advisory committees.

There was a spread of researcher experience/personal participation – across researcher experience levels, lived experience, disability advocacy, providing services, research, and some limited government.

In terms of jurisdictions, there was good representation from populous states – NSW (31%), VIC (26%), QLD (23%) and small contributions from other states. Most respondents were metropolitan (74%) but with some regional (27%).

Intersectionality was relatively limited, with some CALD representation (21%) and very few First Nations (3%) or non-female representation (29%). These are referenced but are too low for meaningful disaggregation.

Just under half of respondents have been aware for a long time (2 years or longer, 40%), but most were more recent (29% last 2 years, 17% last year, 14% in the last 6 months).

The NDRP Easy Read survey had 9 respondents, their demographics were not collected.

F Activity data

This appendix contains detailed breakdowns of activities under the strategic focus areas.

F.1 Strategic Focus Area 1: Build a sustainable foundation

Table F.1 Web form registrations by role

Stakeholder type	Total registrations	Proportion
Researcher	634	51%
Disability advocate	331	26%
Government	164	13%
DPO/DRO	123	10%
Total	**1252**	**100%**

Note: Total registrations only count those with a role counted.

Source: NDRP program data, analysis by ACIL Allen

The NDRP has established a media presence to create foundational awareness in its organisation and its values. This has involved both video and radio broadcasting, as well as a Ministerial launch.

- Round 1 Funding Launch (July 2025): ABC exclusive story on disability-led research project exploring safety restrictions for adults with intellectual disability.
- Radio Release (14-21 July 2025): Achieved 28 newsroom downloads, 93 audio grabs, 13 sources (28 logged events), 14 confirmed broadcast samples, and 2 direct radio interviews.
- Follow-up Media: Interviews conducted or scheduled with Powered Media (Canberra Community Radio Network) and Radio 1RPH disability affairs reporters.
- Ministerial Launch Media (February 2026): Radio and SBS interviews ahead of 19 February 2026 Ministerial launch; national radio release generating 28 newsroom downloads and confirmed broadcasts across more than 50 regional and remote stations.

Table F.2 Evidence to Action registrations by role

Role	Proportion
Government or regulator role	19%
Researcher	18%
Person with disability	16%
Service provider	16%
Deaf, neurodivergent or chronically ill	11%
Disability advocate	8%
Advocacy role	8%
Research role	7%
Carer family or kinship group member of a person with disability	5%

Source: NDRP program data, analysis by ACIL Allen

Table F.3 NDRP engagement summary

Organisation	Engagement
Government (13 organisations)	
Department of Health, Disability and Ageing (DHDA)	Ongoing engagement
National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA)	Meetings; Evidence Advisory Committee participation
NDIS Quality and Safeguards Commission	Meeting
Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet (PM&C)	Meeting
The Treasury (incl. Australian Centre for Evaluation)	Meeting
National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC)	Meeting
Medical Research Future Fund (MRFF)	Meeting
Attorney-General's Department (AGD)	Consultation
Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW)	Meeting
QLD Government	Meeting
VIC Government	Meeting
WA Government	Meeting
SA Government	Meeting
Community (26 organisations)	
Australian Federation of Disability Organisations	One-on-one engagement; meeting/conference
Australian Autism Alliance	One-on-one engagement
Children and Young People with Disability Australia	One-on-one engagement; partnership engagement
Community Mental Health Consortium	One-on-one engagement
Disability Advocacy Network Australia	One-on-one engagement; partnership
Down Syndrome Australia	One-on-one engagement
First Peoples Disability Network	One-on-one engagement
Inclusion Australia	One-on-one engagement; partnership engagement
National Ethnic Disability Alliance	One-on-one engagement
People with Disability Australia	One-on-one engagement
People with Disability Australia	Partnership engagement
Physical Disability Australia	One-on-one engagement; partnership engagement
Women with Disabilities Australia	One-on-one engagement; partnership engagement
Australian Autism Alliance	Partnership engagement
Blind Citizens Australia	Partnership engagement
Mental Health Australia	Discussion/consultation
Speech Pathology Australia	Discussion/consultation
Allied Health Professions Australia	Discussion/consultation
Occupational Therapy Australia	Discussion/consultation
Australian Association of Psychologists	Discussion/consultation
Australian Psychological Society	Discussion/consultation
National Rural Health Alliance	Discussion/consultation
National Disability Services	Meeting
Philanthropy Australia	Meeting
Disability Funders Peer Network	Meeting
Jobs and Skills Funders Network	Meeting

Organisation	Engagement
Research (22 organisations)	
Girra Maa (University of Technology Sydney)	Strategic partnership/MOU
Australian Disability Research Alliance	Collaboration meeting
Swinburne University	Meeting
University of Melbourne	Meeting
Griffith University	Meeting
Flinders University	Meeting
Murdoch Children's Research Institute	Meeting
Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute	Meeting
ANROWS	Meeting
University of New South Wales	Project partnership
University of Sydney	Collaboration
National Centre of Excellence in Intellectual Disability Health	Conference attendance; research symposium; assessment panel
Centre for Research Excellence in Achieving Health Equity for All People with Disabilities	Meeting/conference
Queensland Disability Research Network	Meeting/conference
Australasian Society for Intellectual Disability	Meeting/conference
Autism CRC	Meeting/conference
La Trobe University (Olga Tennison Autism Research Centre)	Meeting/conference
Centre for Developmental Disability Health Monash Health	Meeting/conference
Summer Foundation	Meeting/conference
Sax Institute	Meeting/conference
Australia and New Zealand School of Government	Meeting
Australian Institute of Family Studies	Meeting

Source: NDRP Engagement Summary

F.2 Strategic Focus Area 4: Mobilise evidence for action

Table F.4 Evidence to action registrations, attendance, and quality

Topic	Registrations	Attendance	% Excellent/Very Good Rating
Eliminating Restrictive Practices (Dec. 2024)	850	43%	81%
Knowledge Mobilisation (May 2025)	148	85%	100%
Mobilising Research for Policy Impact* (Jul. 2025)	653	(49–62%)	86%
Doing Research Together (Oct. 2025)	354	42%	92%
Accessible and Inclusive Communities (May 2026)	216	60%	100%

Topic	Registrations	Attendance	% Excellent/Very Good Rating
Safety of People with Disability (Apr. 2026)	240	35%	86%
Let's Talk About Disability Data (May 2026)	417	44%	88%

Source: NDRP program data, analysis by ACIL Allen

F.3 Adjacent benefits: Benefiting target groups and priority cohorts

Table F.5 NDRP engagement with First Nations and people living with a disability

Program	First Nations	People living with disability
Commissioned Research Pilot	7%	93%
Disability Research Leadership Program	5%	100%
Round 1 Safety 2025	0%	72%
Round 2 Research Grants 2026	14%	96%
HubSpot form - network building	NA	18%
Event registrations	NA	20%

Source: NDRP program data, analysis by ACIL Allen

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