Foundational
Supports

Foundational Supports for children with developmental concern, delay and/or disability and their families, carers and kin

Consultation Paper

October 2024

Australian Government

Contents

Acknowledgement of country

The Australian Government Department of Social Services acknowledges Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples throughout Australia and their continuing connection to land, water, culture and community. We pay our respects to the Elders both past and present.

About this consultation paper

This consultation paper is one of a number of ways people with disability, families, carers and kin, and other stakeholders can support the design and implementation of Foundational Supports. Foundational Supports are separate to those delivered through the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) or mainstream services. There is an Easy Read version of this consultation paper on our website at in PDF and Word.

An Auslan interpreted version is also available.

We know a good future for children starts early. The early years of a child's life, are a critical window of opportunity to positively influence a child's:

- development
- sense of identity
- health
- learning
- safety
- resilience
- happiness.

We want your feedback and ideas on how to design Foundational Supports for parents/families/carers/kin and children aged under 9 in their care where there is a developmental concern, delay and/or disability. This includes understanding your views on existing services for children and families.

This collection of Foundational Supports are called General and Targeted Supports for children and their families. There are examples to show how Foundational Supports might help children under 9 and their families and how the community, workforce and the broader sector might be ready for these supports in their communities.

These examples are not exhaustive and don't mean governments have decided how the supports will be delivered or what supports will be included. They are intended to generate feedback to help inform government considerations and prioritisations of investments and resources. We expect the design of Foundational Supports will consider where and how supports are delivered to make sure they meet the needs of local communities and complement existing service systems. They should also make sure there is access to relevant supports across the country.

There is a separate paper, General Supports, that focuses on the design of information, advice and supports aimed at helping to build the capacity of all people with disability, and their families, carers and kin, to fully participate in the community. This includes making decisions and advocating on issues that affect them. This paper also covers General Foundational Supports but with a focus on children under 9 only. We want to explore how Foundational Supports for children fits into and the broader system, including mainstream services and the NDIS. You can read more detail on the difference in these terms later in the paper. Navigation/service-finding supports will be included in future consultation activities. We also welcome any feedback through this consultation on service-finding for the groups covered in this paper.

Note for prospective service providers: We will promote future funding opportunities via normal procurement/commissioning and grant round mechanisms. This will take into account transitional arrangements associated with reforms to existing programs. As the concepts in this paper have not yet been agreed by governments, they have no status within the provider market and should not be relied on.

A Glossary of terms is provided at **Appendix A**.

Have your say

The Australian Government is seeking your feedback on the questions in this discussion paper. Your views and insights will be used to inform all governments on the design and implementation of Foundational Supports.

You can provide your feedback via the DSS Engage website. We encourage you to complete the short, guided questionnaire and/or you can make a submission by uploading, emailing or posting us a document, video or audio file.

If you would like to email a submission you can do this via: Foundational.Supports@dss.gov.au

Other ways to have your say

There will be more opportunities to share your views through consultations over the coming weeks, including on the issues covered in this paper and on other areas of supports.

To register your interest in future engagement and consultations, please email us at Foundational.Supports@DSS.gov.au.

Privacy Notice

The Department of Social Services (the department) is inviting you to provide feedback on the questions in this discussion paper to help inform governments around the design of additional supports separate to those that are delivered through the NDIS and mainstream services.

The department will collect information from you directly when you submit responses to the questions in this discussion paper. This information will be used to inform the development of additional supports.

When you submit the survey or an email to the department, you consent to your response being analysed by the department or agency responsible for disability policy in each state and territory, and by a third-party provider, The Social Deck, on behalf of governments.

You can view our full privacy notice by clicking here.

Accessibility

There are different ways to engage so you can choose how you want to contribute to this important reform.

This includes online events and in-person events in some locations. The Social Deck is supporting governments to run these consultation activities.

If you would like to contribute in another way, you can contact The Social Deck at foundationalsupports@thesocialdeck.com to discuss other options or for help to contribute.

Language and concepts in this discussion paper

Any reference to parents, carers and families in this paper is intended to include the diversity of people who fulfil these important relationship roles for the children in their lives, including biological and adoptive mothers and fathers, LGBTIQA+ parents, kin / kinship systems, guardians and other carers, and extended family members (and many combinations of these).

Every child deserves the opportunity for the best start to life, setting a strong foundation to achieve their full potential, no matter where they are born or raised. This paper acknowledges that this might mean different things for different children. When young children are slower to develop physical, emotional, social, communication or thinking skills than expected (beyond usual differences in development between children of the same age), it's called **developmental delay**. Developmental delay can be identified in the way children move, communicate, think and learn, or behave with others. **Developmental concern** is where someone identifies there may be a difference in development and are not sure if it is significant and there is no diagnosis.

If a child has developmental concerns or delay, getting evidence-based early supports for the family and the child, where they live, learn and play, can make a difference. Additional Foundational Supports are being designed to help in this area. Sometimes, children who get the right early supports need less or no support as they get older. Longer term developmental delays can effect a child's ongoing function and interactions, and children may need ongoing support for longer or at different points across their lifetime.

We know that people use different words to talk about disability and each person has a way of talking about disability, and about themselves, they like best. Some people like to use 'disabled person' (identity-first language), while some like to use 'person with disability' (person-first language), and some are fine with using either.

We use person-first language to talk about disability. This means we usually use the term 'person with disability' in this paper. The language used in this paper is not intended to diminish an individual's identity as a person with disability. We recognise that the appropriate use of language varies between individuals and disability communities. We acknowledge the importance of having conversations with individuals about their preferred language.

A commitment by all Australian Governments

All Australian governments have committed to significant reforms to build an inclusive Australian society where people with disability can fulfil their potential as equal members of the community.

Thousands of people with disability and families told the Independent Review of the NDIS there is a need for improved inclusion and accessibility of mainstream services, improvements to the way the NDIS works for everyone involved and a need for additional supports in two areas:

- 'General' Foundational Supports to deliver access to trusted information and advice and build the capacity of all people with disability. These supports are being designed for people aged under 65 to fully participate in the community, and to make decisions and advocate on issues that affect them. General Foundational Supports would not exclude those over 65 from accessing or benefiting from general information. This includes information, advice and supports for families, carers and kin and community organisations where appropriate.
- 'Targeted' Foundational Supports to operate between inclusive mainstream services (e.g. in areas like early childhood education and care (ECEC) settings and schools) and the specialist supports accessed through the NDIS. These supports will focus on helping certain groups of people that are not eligible for support through the NDIS, in areas where the need is greatest.

The NDIS Review recommended there should be a connected system of supports that includes mainstream services such as:

- ECEC settings and schools
- availability of Foundational Supports for children and families
- a new early intervention pathway in the NDIS for children with the highest level of needs.

The Commonwealth and state and territory governments have agreed to implement additional supports to those delivered through the NDIS and mainstream services – referred to as Foundational Supports. You can read more about what governments agreed at **Appendix B**. Governments acknowledge it is important to make sure the design and implementation of additional supports is guided by the needs and lived experience of people with disability, families, carers and kin.

This discussion paper is one way governments are working to let the community know about this important reform and ask you to tell us about your ideas on the design and implementation of additional supports.

As we progress this important reform, governments will work to make sure there is good community and sector understanding of:

- when new or additional services and supports are going to be available
- who they are designed to help and support
- how you can access them
- any transitional arrangements.

We will be clear with the community about how supports will be put in place and who will be responsible for them once the details have been agreed between the Commonwealth and state and territory governments.

We will monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of programs, services and supports to make sure they support good outcomes for the people that access them.

Focus of this paper

This paper focuses on potential Foundational Supports for children aged under 9 with developmental concern, delay and/or disability and their families, carers and kin.

The ideas in this paper aim to help start the conversation around what Foundational Supports for this cohort might include. These early ideas do not represent an agreed service offering or decisions by governments. The feedback we get will help governments make their decisions.

What are Foundational Supports for children with developmental concern, delay or disability and their families?

Most families will access formal supports at particular milestones in their child's life, such as parenting resources, health services and early childhood education and care.

Some children and their parents, carers and families may benefit from more detailed information, advice or supports when they are concerned about their child's development. This is where Foundational Supports can play a role as part of a broader system of supports.

The Independent Review of the NDIS proposed Foundational Supports should be categorised into two kinds of services 'General' and 'Targeted'. This paper covers both in relation to children aged under 9 and their families, carers and kin.

General Foundational Supports are for parents, carers and kin and their children with developmental concern, delay and/or disability, including those accessing mainstream services and/or the NDIS. These supports have a similar intent as General Foundational Supports for people with disability and their families, carers and kin (discussed in the General Supports discussion paper). General Foundational Supports for children and families could offer support like access to trusted, evidence-based information, resources and advice. This would help them to care for and raise their child/children, build their capability and skills, and connect them with networks to support their child's development. This aligns with the evidence that children thrive when parents, carers and kin feel confident, supported and included in their role as caregivers, first teachers and nurturers. These supports go beyond existing inclusive and accessible mainstream services and community supports.

General Foundational Supports are seen as more community based and accessible online or in person. For example, through groups or workshops in the natural setting of children and families.

Targeted Foundational Supports are for children with developmental delay and their families, who need more assistance than mainstream services and General Foundational Supports. Targeted Foundational Supports are intended to:

- help families better understand their child's specific needs, how they understand their world and how to help their development
- give more tailored, early intervention support to help the child develop in the area they are delayed.

Supports can offer specialised, evidence-based early intervention. They can be low intensity or periodic, to help a child's development, such as family-centred allied health. For children and families with complex support needs it might be intensive family support to help build their knowledge, skills and abilities (one-on-one support). A child getting Targeted Foundational Supports may also access General Foundational Supports and mainstream services.

Targeted supports are not intended for:

- children with disability with impairments that are, or are likely to be, permanent and result in substantially reduced functional capacity requiring supports for the person's lifetime
- children with developmental delay that have substantial reduction in functional capacity with the need for individually planned and coordinated supports and services over an extended period.

These children will continue to be assessed under the disability and/or early intervention requirements of the NDIS Act and Rules and, where eligible, receive supports through the NDIS.

While 'Foundational Supports' is new, there are already some services funded by governments which could be considered Foundational Supports.

A connected system of supports

General and Targeted Foundational Supports will be established in addition to early intervention already provided through mainstream service systems. They could be designed in a way that links or fits in with existing supports and referral pathways.

For some families, the combination of mainstream services and General Foundational Supports will meet their needs and that of their child/children. For other families, they may need a combination of mainstream services and General and Targeted Foundational Supports. Others may need a combination of mainstream services, General Foundational Supports and early intervention or disability supports through the NDIS for their child.

Governments are considering the issues of eligibility and access for Foundational Supports, including the level of information or assessment required to support this.

Information and advice available through mainstream services and Foundational Supports could help support families access the services and supports that best meet their needs and that of their child/children.

What do the recent changes to the NDIS Act mean for my child?

Following the NDIS Review, there have been some changes made to the NDIS Act. This is the legislation which establishes the National Disability Insurance Scheme, and the National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA), which administers the Scheme. The NDIS Act sets out how a person can become a participant in the NDIS and how a participant's individual, goal-based plan is prepared and reviewed. This includes how the NDIA approves the funding of reasonable and necessary supports.

The recent 'Getting the NDIS Back on Track' changes to the NDIS Act do not change a child's participant status or remove their access to the NDIS.

The legislation provides the framework for new rules under the NDIS Act to be developed. The goal is to make better decisions that are fair, transparent and consistent.

New rules to clarify access for NDIS participants, and to support assessment and decision making, will be designed with the disability community and will need to be agreed by states and territories as part of a connected system including Foundational Supports and mainstream services.

Any rule changes under the NDIS Act relating to a child being supported by Foundational Supports will not take effect until relevant Foundational Supports are in place.

The community will help codesign improvements to supports under the NDIS for children under 9. A Children's Expert Advisory Group has been established to provide expert advice to the NDIA. You can read more here.

Nothing is changing now. Once Foundational Supports and changes to the NDIS are in place, families will be shown how to get supports that are best for their child's needs. The types of supports that some children need will be available through Foundational Supports. They won't need to access the NDIS or have an individual budget to get these supports. For others, where the child has a substantial reduction in their functional capacity and meets the eligibility requirements for the NDIS, the NDIS will enable access to appropriate supports.

Who can access the NDIS, including the Early Intervention Pathway?

What it looks like now

Currently, early intervention access for children under 6 with developmental delay (as defined under the NDIS Act) is offered under the early childhood approach. The early childhood approach helps children younger than 6 with developmental delay, or children younger than 9 with disability and their families, to access the right support. Children younger than 6 currently do not need a diagnosis to get support through the early childhood approach where there are concerns about their development. This service is offered by early childhood partners.

What it might look like in the future

The NDIS Review recommended a connected system of supports for children and families. This includes supports through mainstream services, Foundational Supports and a new early intervention pathway. Access to the new early intervention pathway would be under the early intervention requirements of the NDIS Act for children with developmental delay with substantially reduced functional capacity. These children need individually planned and coordinated supports and services over an extended period.

There will be codesign with the community about a new intervention pathway to support children under 9 who are likely to benefit from early intervention supports under the NDIS. The pathway will look at the services and supports delivered through mainstream services and Foundational Supports as well as the specific needs of the child consistent with the NDIS Act.

Intended outcomes

The purpose of Foundational Supports is to allow parents and carers to support a child's development. This will help children who are developing differently to:

- meet developmental milestones (where this is possible)
- support inclusion and participation in community settings
- learn
- play and be social
- emotional, physical and mental health.

General and Targeted Foundational Supports are intended to achieve the following outcomes:

For children:

- Developmental concerns are identified early.
- Support a child's development, including helping those who are developing differently to meet their developmental milestones (where this is possible). This includes their social, emotional, physical and cognitive development and in their learning and play.
- Children are allowed and supported to take part in everyday activities.
- Potential impacts of developmental delay are reduced through early intervention and evidence-based supports that meet a child's individual needs.

For parents, carers, families and kin:

- Families and carers are connected to and get quality mainstream and community services and supports.
- Families and carers get trusted, evidence-based, high-quality information on child development and how to meet their child's developmental needs.
- Families and carers are empowered and confident to understand and meet their child's needs. They can help them take part in everyday activities (home, learning, play, community), find information to decide which supports they can use, and make sure their child is getting the right support.
- Families and children are supported to set, work towards and reach their goals.
- Families and carers, are confident engaging and connecting with their child, are able to support them, and understand and meet their needs.
- Families and carers know what they need and can identify and advocate the right combination of supports for their child.
- Families and carers can support their child to grow and thrive, embed routines at home and better understand their child's unique needs and how they interact with and understand their world.

For service providers, professionals and community organisations:

- Services and community activities can support families, carers, and kin with learning and growing their understanding of developmental concern, delay and/or disability and capacity to support their children's needs.

Your views

Scope and intended outcomes

We are interested in hearing from the **families, carer and kin, the community and service providers** about:

1. Is the broad focus and scope in line with what you expected? Are there any gaps?
2. Are the intended outcomes the right ones? Are there any gaps? How would you measure them or like to see progress and improvements measured?

Designing supports for children and families

We want to look in more detail what the following categories of Foundational Support could look like for:

- General Foundational Supports
- Targeted Foundational Supports.

Why is change needed?

In December 2023, National Cabinet agreed to design and implement a new system of Foundational Supports to improve access to supports and services for people with disability outside the NDIS. In 2021, one in five children were developmentally vulnerable on one or more domains of the Australian Early Development Census by the time they reached school[1]. Approximately 154,616 children younger than 9 with an NDIS plan, and a further 10,408 accessing early connections (as at June 2024)[2]. With children younger than 9 making up approximately a quarter of all NDIS participants, there is a clear gap in the availability of appropriate early intervention supports outside the NDIS.

Through the Independent Review of the NDIS, which had significant public engagement, people with disability, parents, carers, families, kin, representative organisations and providers identified issues with the way some services and supports operate. They also identified ways to strengthen this system, including:

- developmental concerns not being detected early enough
- supports for children with emerging developmental concerns and disability are too focused on a clinical centred model of support and not enough on functional and support needs
- a lack of effective supports outside the NDIS and not enough focus on supporting children in everyday settings, where they live, play and learn
- access to evidence-based best practice supports.

Most people don't know about developmental delay or disability until it happens in their own families. It can be a very overwhelming time. Families need to be given information, education and peer support from other families so they can build skills and confidence to support their child.

Families can't get enough information about where to go for help and what type of support is going to be effective for their child. This means they go straight to the NDIS in the absence of an alternate path.

In looking at how to improve the NDIS, the Panel found that you need to change the systems around it. The NDIS Review recommended there should be a connected system of supports for children and families. It recommended that children with developmental concerns, delay and/or disability should be matched with supports that best meet their needs. This requires more mainstream services and the establishment of Foundational Supports, as many children don't need the highly specialised and intensive supports the NDIS delivers.

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[1] Source is the NDIS Review - *Working together to deliver the NDIS*.

[2] NDIS Quarterly Report to disability ministers 30 June 2024.

They also made some recommendations around how the NDIS could be improved for children.

Governments recognise that to best support children with developmental delay and/or disability and their families, carers and kin, there needs to be a strong system of support for families. Setting up Foundational Supports is an important part of this change.

Effective child and family-centred, and strength and evidence-based services can lead to significant improvements across developmental domains. This is crucial in supporting children to take part in daily life activities. Foundational Supports will be one of a number of critical ways governments will work to make sure all children can thrive in their early years and have the chance to reach their full potential.

A possible concept of a service offering for General Foundational Supports for children

General Foundational Supports are intended to support children with developmental concern, delay (including suspected delay) and/or disability and their family, carers and kin. Children getting the NDIS and children not getting the NDIS may be able to access General Foundational Supports that are relevant to their needs.

Families could access General Foundational Supports through opt-in or self-service options that focus on building their knowledge, skills, abilities and support networks by getting services. Examples of what these supports could look like **may** include:

- **Information, resources and advice** to help parents to understand their child's needs, build their capacity and navigate service systems. This includes building knowledge about their child's developmental milestones in terms of physical, emotional, social, communication and cognitive skills. Information may offer advice on how to set routines and to support a child with developmental concern, delay (ensuring information is neuro-affirming), disability and how to advocate for their child.
- **Facilitated parenting groups/peer support groups** to give general information and advice about parenting and delays in their child's development. This includes social and emotional support for families and carers.
- **Shorter or one off courses or workshops** on specific topics. For example, child development, supporting emotional regulation, how to prepare for important transition points in a child's life.
- **Evidence-based online and in-person programs on development** to provide tools and practical ways to support parenting and child development.

These supports could target disability-specific content, including intersectional needs, to cater for a range of needs of children and their families.

These kinds of supports would increase the capacity of families and carers to improve their skills and knowledge. This may include supporting their child through actions they can take in the home and find extra supports for their child's needs. They could also advocate for adjustments to help their child to play, learn and engage in the community. Many families may have no knowledge of developmental delay and/or disability until it happens in their family. Added to the joy of being a parent or carer, this time can be overwhelming. It can add extra demands and stress, and for some people can be isolating. Families need to have information, education and peer support from other families so they can build skills and confidence to support their child.

There are some supports already in the community which align with the goals of Foundational Supports and have a strong evidence base. These could be modified or enhanced if needed. New or additional evidence-based supports may also be required.

How might General Foundational Supports be delivered?

General Foundational Supports could be delivered in group settings, one-to-one in person, online, via phone, in community settings or hybrid (combined) approach.

What could this look like to me?

Some examples to illustrate how this could look:

- A parent getting evidence-based online information, advice and resources to understand and support their child's development. For example, this might include learning materials on social communication if a parent has observed their child is finding it difficult to understand social cues with their peers during playtime. The trusted online information and advice could also outline how to get help to identify and access supports early for their child at a local, state and national level.
- A parent attending a local peer support group to meet other families in similar circumstances or getting expert advice in person.
- Findings from these consultations will guide government decision making on what type of advice, resources and supports (evidence-based and aligned to best practice) could be most helpful for families, carers and kin of children with developmental delay and/or disability and those with intersectional needs.

Your views

Questions about General Foundational Supports

These questions are focused on families, carers and children under 9. Questions are slightly different to those in a separate discussion paper on 'General Supports' which had a focus on supporting people of all ages.

We are interested in hearing from families, carers and kin and the community, representative organisations, researchers and service providers about how they see General Foundational Supports working, including:

1. What supports have you found useful that you think other parents and carers may need?
2. What do you think is needed that is not available to you now or in the past?
3. How can existing supports or services better link up to support important transitional life stages or events that families experience like children starting daycare or preschool? Can you give us some examples of where this is working well?
4. How could existing supports or services be better in meeting the needs of:
    - families who identify as First Nations, culturally and linguistically diverse, or other diverse groups
    - families who have a range of complex needs
    - families who live in regional, rural and remote areas
    - families who have more than one child with support needs?
5. What are the most common ways parents and carers hear about available supports and services?
6. Who do you trust for information?
7. Are there more effective ways of promoting new and existing supports and services?
8. What are some of the common barriers to getting supports and services for children with developmental concerns, delay and/or disability and their families (e.g. costs, transport, location or lack of inclusion)?
9. How might these barriers be reduced?
10. What have you found makes a service more or less accessible, safe and inclusive?
11. What are the preferred ways to get General Foundational Supports, such as face to face, online, multimode or other?
12. How do we make sure families get General Foundational Supports at the time they need them most, such as when parents first have a concern that their child may have a developmental delay?
13. What information and advice may help you find the right services, or know that you need this kind of support?
14. What do we need to consider to make sure services are inclusive and culturally appropriate (e.g. they support families who are culturally and linguistically diverse, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and people with intersectional needs)?

A possible concept of a service offering for Targeted Foundational Supports

Targeted Foundational Supports are for children with developmental delay who need more support than (or in addition to) mainstream services and General Foundational Supports.

Why are you using the term developmental delay?

Developmental delay is a term used to describe a delay in a child's development. It means that a child finds it much harder to do everyday things that other children their age can do, for example dress themselves, talk or walk. Developmental delay might be short term or long term.

These services are for children with lower support needs who are having challenges in their development in a specific area. Support needs of children with developmental delay are not all the same and can differ in impact across multiple different developmental areas and can improve or get worse at different paces. These include:

- physical skills (reaching, crawling, walking, drawing, building, holding a pen)
- cognitive skills (thinking, learning, solving problems)
- communication skills (talking, listening, understanding others)
- self-help or adaptive skills (eating, dressing)
- social or emotional skills (playing, interacting with others).

Children and their families who need **Targeted Foundational Supports** could be eligible to get one or more of the following supports, depending on their needs:

- **Low intensity or periodic child and family-centred allied health supports**. Dependent on the child this might include support from one or more of the following:
    - speech pathology
    - physiotherapy
    - psychology
    - occupational therapy or other allied health specialists (could in some cases include providing one off/low-cost assistive technology to make everyday tasks easier and safer).
- **One-on-one capacity building**. Some families who need more support, may need more intensive, one-on-one capacity building. A suitably qualified and experienced worker could provide coordination and help families get appropriate supports. This could include building the knowledge, skills and abilities of the family and others in a child's natural environment to help the care for and raise their child. This support may be delivered jointly with allied health supports. Examples of these supports could include:
    - helping the family to identify and address needs in line with their goals, and connecting and supporting access to information, advice and emotional support
    - helping the family develop self-advocacy skills (on behalf of their child)
    - connecting the family and child with the right services and getting specialist expertise to navigate transition and interaction of multiple service systems (e.g. advice/strategies and support to increase their child's inclusion and

    participation in mainstream and community services like early childcare and learning settings or recreation)
  - increasing the family's confidence and capacity to manage and respond to their child's support needs
  - increasing their child's ability to do the activities they need or want to do
  - developing ways, with the family, to help the child take part in everyday routines, or identify changes to the child's environment, including developing a plan of action to guide the family.

How might Targeted Foundational Supports be delivered?

Decisions on how to deliver Targeted Foundation Supports are yet to be made by governments. They will consider options to use existing services and infrastructure to deliver these supports where children live, learn and play. These services may be provided in group settings (helped by an allied health worker or a multidisciplinary team) or individually in a child's natural environment. This shifts away from a mostly one-on-one therapy model in clinical settings, which is not seen as best practice early intervention for most children.

What could this look like to me?

This could look like your child having access to allied health, such as an occupational therapist to improve fine motor skills if your child is having difficulty holding utensils, such as pencils or cutlery. Your child may be referred to attend a group with other children getting similar supports (helped by an allied health worker or a multidisciplinary team) or individually in your child's natural environment. The occupational therapist may identify where one off low-cost assistive technology is needed, like a grip to help your child hold utensils. This can enhance their independence at ECEC centre and home.

If your child is identified as having concerns across a number of developmental areas and your child and your family could benefit from help connecting with supports across multiple service systems, such as health and education, extra supports could be offered. Working in a way that best suits your family, this support could be delivered by a qualified and experienced person with child development expertise. They could coordinate and help your family to identify and address needs in line with your goals. This could look like building the knowledge, skills and abilities of your family and other individuals in your child's life. It could include providing advice, emotional support and help to develop self-advocacy skills so your family can better support your child's development and thrive.

The design of Targeted Foundational Supports will consider the detail and delivery of allied health and intensive family capacity building that could be most helpful including for those with intersectional needs.

What if my child needs more support that this?

If a child has developmental delay or disability with substantial reduction in functional capacity requiring individually coordinated supports over a longer term, they would be referred to the NDIS.

How might families learn about Foundational Supports?

Families can learn about these supports using the various channels people access information through. This includes government websites, health services, news and social media providers and other local connections. Part of the purpose of Foundational Supports will be to make sure accurate, reliable and trustworthy information is readily available to families, parents and kin. This would include information about developmental delay and/or disability, as well as the supports and services available.

Consideration is being given to where developmental delay may be identified in a child's natural journey. This includes how to make sure parents, carers, and those who work with children could be supported to identify and refer families to the supports that are best for their child.

While not covered in this paper, navigation will be an important part of design. This relates to 'how do families find out about, and then get access to the right advice and supports for their child?'. Thinking about the range of navigation (from self-service information to one-on-one/more individualised navigational support) will be undertaken. However, first it is important to discuss the services families may look for, which is the focus of this paper.

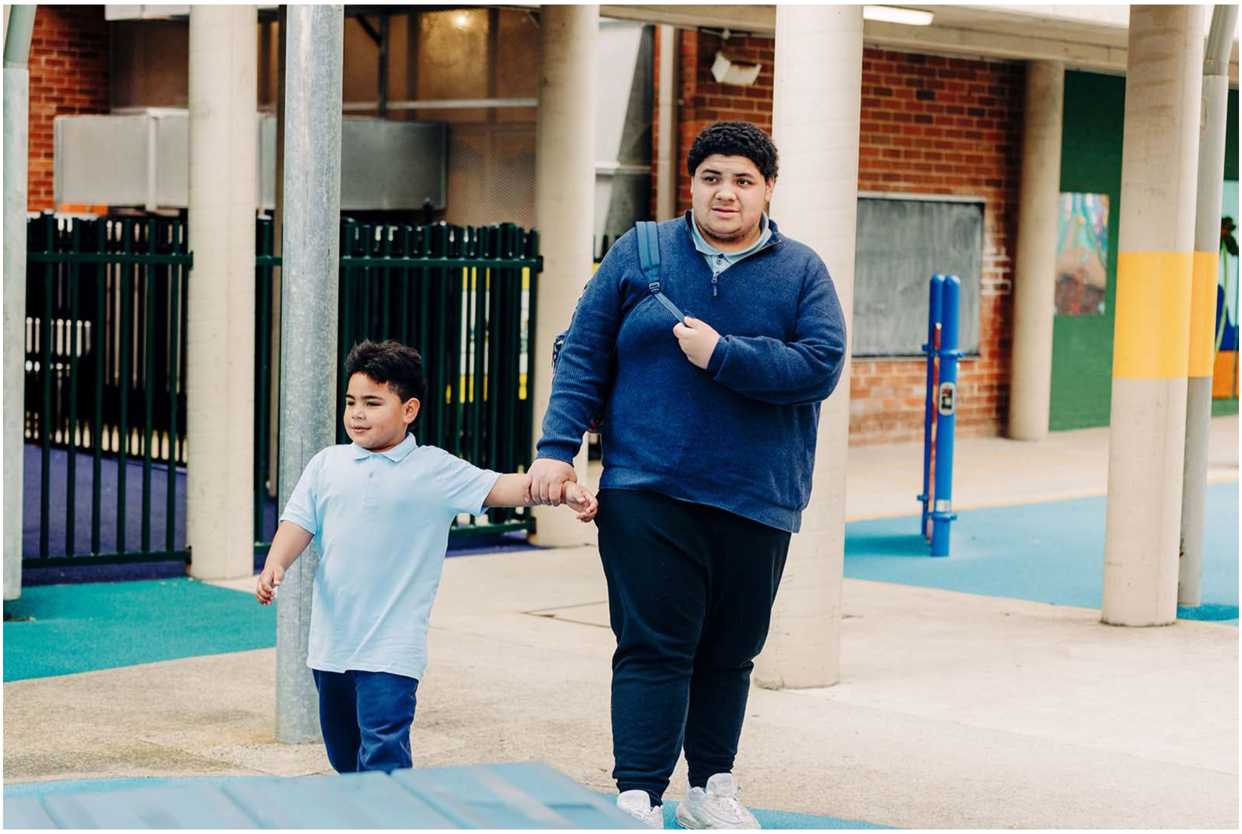
Your views

Questions about Targeted Foundational Supports

We are interested in hearing from families, carers and kin, the community and service providers **about what Targeted Foundational Supports should look like,** including:

1. Which allied health services or family services that helps build knowledge, skills and abilities have you found useful?
2. What would make existing supports easier to access or better connected and integrated, so families' experience a streamlined pathway(s) to Targeted Foundational Supports?
3. What do you think is needed that isn't available to you now or wasn't available to you in the past (depending on where you are in your journey)?
4. How could these existing services be made better to meet the needs of:
    - families who identify as First Nations, culturally and linguistically diverse, and other diverse groups
    - families who experience a range of complex needs
    - families who live in regional, rural and remote areas?
5. What are some of the common barriers to accessing allied health or intensive capacity building services?
    - How might these barriers be reduced?
    - What makes a service more or less accessible, safe and inclusive?
6. What are the preferred ways to deliver Targeted Foundational Supports, such as face to face, online, multimode or other?

7. What information and advice may help you find the right services or know that you need this kind of support (some families may not be aware if their child has emerging developmental concerns.)?
8. How could existing supports in schools and early childhood settings be more accessible for children and families?
    - What supports offered through school or early childhood settings have you found to be the most useful?
    - How can schools and early childhood settings better inform parents about the supports they offer?



What might need to be considered in respect to those who support children or deliver these kinds of services?

To make sure a Foundational Support system works well for children and their families, it will be important to build workforce capacity and capability. For some of the services described, the proposed workforce and services listed already exist and might need to be expanded, for others emerging practice or new services will be required. Foundational Supports could look to be delivered through existing services where appropriate and phased in over time. Services are expected to commence from 2025-26.

Across some fields there are challenges in attracting and retaining staff, and in some rural and remote areas professional development and access to in-person training can be challenging. Where different workforces can be used or supported will need to be considered as part of design work. Thought will need to be given to how organisations with proven expertise in supporting child development, disability, and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, can be involved in service delivery.

Consideration will also need to be given to how best practice can be shared among the sector, so that successes are used rather than having to be replicated.

Another consideration is how to make sure there is an appropriate level of consistency in the scope of services offered so children are able to access quality, evidence-based support that is right for them, no matter where they live. This will allow structured flexibility in different regions and locations that takes account of local factors and existing services.

The design of Foundational Supports will look at other reforms and work to improve the early childhood system. For example, changes to the way families and children are supported within the NDIS early intervention pathway, the Early Years Strategy, Productivity Commission Inquiry into the Early Childhood Education and Care Sector and actions related to children under Australia's Disability Strategy 2021-2031. A few key examples include:

Mainstream services - By improving the capacity and capability of the people a child interacts with regularly, there is a greater chance the child will develop meaningful and responsive relationships with those individuals, which is important during early childhood development.[3] Improved inclusion in mainstream services is a recommendation of the NDIS Review. All governments are considering these recommendations, with a response due by the end of 2024. In designing Foundational Supports, we need to consider the information and advice for those who work with children (in mainstream services) will need so they can guide parents towards these (additional) supports as appropriate.

Improved identification of developmental delay - The NDIS Review and Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People with Disability recommended that more could be done to identify developmental delay earlier. Governments are continuing to consider ways to improve identification. Any

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[3] ECIA_National_Conference_2012.pdf (rch.org.au)

improvement will allow these children to be better referred to Foundation Supports, or the NDIS as appropriate, for their level of need and circumstances.

Best practice – The Commonwealth Government has commissioned a review of Best Practice in Early Childhood Intervention which will assist where appropriate to guide design/implementation of Foundational Support for children. This review addresses Action 2.4 of the Early Childhood Targeted Action Plan, which is part of the implementation of *Australia's Disability Strategy 2021-2031*.

Best practice principles guide the way early childhood practitioners work with families of children with developmental delay and/or disability. Services funded under Foundational Supports are intended to be best practice. Best practice includes principles like:

- being evidence-based and outcome focused
- supporting the child and family in their environment
- being family and child centred
- being strengths-based and inclusive (of neurodiversity, of culture, of disability).

Your views

Questions about community and workforce

We are interested in hearing views from the community, workforce and the broader sectors about:

1. How do we build the capacity of the sector and workforce, including their readiness, to support families and children under the General and Targeted Foundational Supports service offering?
    - How can existing workforce shortages, including workforce challenges in rural and remote communities, be addressed?
    - What types of training are needed to help address capability gaps or potential future market gaps in these types of supports?
    - Addressing getting these services to children in rural and remote areas in relation to workforce?
    - Are telehealth services a viable option for rural and remote families for particular types of supports, reducing the need to travel to access these supports?
2. How might we encourage innovation, quality and best practice in the delivery of Foundational Supports for children and their families?
3. What does success look like and what resources, support or contract arrangements do you think service providers need to better communicate achievements and needs, and be able to deliver services such as those outlined in this paper?

What next?

We will analyse what families, carers and kin of children with developmental concern, delay and/or disability and the community tell us. This includes what you tell us about the ideas in this paper and your response to the discussion questions.

We will also be asking for your views in a range of other ways such as online, in a survey or in person, as we know people like to give feedback in different ways. You can give us feedback through one or all of these methods.

We will also consult on additional topics in the future.

We will use this information to inform and refine the design of these additional supports.

Engagement

Engaging with families, carers, kin, people with disability, representative organisations and service providers on your views.

We will engage on some topics first rather than everything at once as there are a number of different disability related reforms underway.

This engagement is about support for children with developmental concern, developmental delay and disability and their families, carers and kin.

Review what you have told us

Commonwealth, state and territory governments will consider carefully what you have told us about the topics included in this paper and consultations about this paper and on other topics.

Planning for implementation and commissioning

Commonwealth, state and territory governments, will work with families, the disability community and the sector to plan for implementation, commission new or reformed services and supports, and consider how people will access these supports into the future.

Supports become available

New/reformed General and Targeted Supports will be phased in gradually from 2025–26 and will build over time.

Now

Next

Appendix A

Glossary

Please note: this glossary is included to assist readers to understand some of the ideas and options presented in this paper. The definitions have no formal status. Any feedback on the terms included in the glossary, or views on terms that may be missing, is welcomed.

Term	Definition
Advocacy	This works to promote and protect the rights of people with disability by helping to remove barriers to their full and equal participation in the community. This paper focuses on self-advocacy only.
Early Intervention Requirements	Under the NDIS Act, a person ***meets the early intervention requirements*** if The person: • has one or more identified intellectual, cognitive, neurological, sensory or physical impairments that are, or are likely to be, permanent; or • has one or more identified impairments to which a psychosocial disability is attributable and that are, or are likely to be, permanent; or • is a child who has developmental delay; and (b) the CEO is satisfied that provision of early intervention supports for the person is likely to benefit the person by reducing the person's future needs for supports in relation to disability; and (c)the CEO is satisfied that provision of early intervention supports for the person is likely to benefit the person by: (i) mitigating or alleviating the impact of the person's impairment upon the functional capacity of the person to undertake communication, social interaction, learning, mobility, self-care or self-management; or (ii) preventing the deterioration of such functional capacity; or (iii) improving such functional capacity; or (iv) strengthening the sustainability of informal supports available to the person, including through building the capacity of the person's carer. and (d) the CEO is satisfied any early intervention supports that would be likely to benefit the person as mentioned in paragraphs (b) and (c) would be NDIS supports for the person

Term	Definition
	Note: In certain circumstances, a person with a degenerative condition could meet the early intervention requirements and therefore become a participant. (1A) For the purposes of subparagraph (1)(a)(i) or (ii), an impairment or impairments that are episodic or fluctuating may be taken to be permanent despite the episodic or fluctuating nature of the impairments. (2) The CEO is taken to be satisfied as mentioned in paragraphs (1)(b) and (c) if one or more of the person's impairments are prescribed by the National Disability Insurance Scheme rules for the purposes of this subsection. Note 1: The time at which a requirement in this section needs to be met is the time the matter falls to be determined. For an access request, that time is the time of considering the request (see paragraph 21(1)(c)). Note 2: National Disability Insurance Scheme rules may be made in relation to this section under subsection 27(1).
Capacity Building	Increasing people's knowledge, skills and abilities. For example, developing someone's skills in a certain area to allow them to live more independently.
Carers	A person or persons who provide care or support for a person with disability or child (where there are concerns about their development) and is not a paid support worker.
Community Capacity building	Increasing the ability of an organisation/s that deliver community services or community activities to be more inclusive, through information, advice/education, and sharing of better practice.
Community organisations	Any organisation engaged in charitable or other community based activity operating under Australian law and not established for the purpose of making a profit (and not a government entity).
Community services and activities	Supports and activities run by, in and for the local community. They include everything from local businesses to local sporting or recreational groups.
Developmental delay	Developmental delay is a term used to describe a delay in a child's development. It means that a child finds it much harder to do everyday things that other children their age can do, for example dress

Term	Definition
	themselves, talk or walk. Developmental delay might be short term or long term. There is also a definition of developmental delay in the NDIS Act: ***Developmental delay*** means a delay in the development of a child under 6 years of age that: • is attributable to a mental or physical impairment or a combination of mental and physical impairments; and • results in substantial reduction in functional capacity in one or more of the following areas of major life activity: ○ self-care ○ receptive and expressive language ○ cognitive development ○ motor development • results in the need for a combination and sequence of special interdisciplinary or generic care, treatment or other services that are of extended duration and are individually planned and coordinated.
Disability	There are a range of ways to understand disability and how people experience disability. The social model of disability recognises attitudes, practices and structures can be disabling and act as barriers preventing people from fulfilling their potential and exercising their rights as equal members of the community. This aligns with the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons With Disabilities, which provides that disability results from the ‘interaction between persons with impairments and attitudinal and environmental barriers hindering full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others’.
Early Intervention	Providing support to a child or person with disability as early as possible to build skills and independence and reduce the impacts of disability or developmental delay in its interaction with the environment.
General Foundational Supports	This is a category of Foundational Support. This includes supports that deliver access to trusted information and advice and build the capacity of all people with disability. These are being designed for people aged under 65 to fully participate in the community, and to make decisions and advocate on issues that impact them but would not exclude those over 65 from accessing or benefiting from general information. This also includes information, advice and supports for families, carers and kin, and community organisations where appropriate.

Term	Definition
Family Capacity Building	This is a sub-category of support that is focused on helping families, carers and kin of a person with disability to build their own knowledge and skills so they can better support the person with disability to exercise choice, control and independence and to participate in their community.
Foundational Supports	Governments are working together to design and deliver additional supports in the community. These additional supports are called Foundational Supports and include General and Targeted Foundational Supports and are in addition to what is offered through mainstream or community services and the NDIS.
Independent review into the NDIS	An independent review to put people with disability back at the centre of the NDIS. The purpose was to restore trust, confidence and pride in the Scheme. The Review looked at: • the Scheme's design, operations and sustainability • how to build a more responsive, supportive and sustainable market and workforce. See: www.ndisreview.gov.au
Intersectionality	Intersectionality represents the ways that multiple forms of inequality or disadvantage sometimes compound, and they create obstacles that are different or unique.
Low-cost assistive technology (AT)	Tools or software that make everyday tasks easier and safer, and supports children to meet communication, mobility and independence milestones / goals.
Mainstream services	Mainstream services (also known as universal or essential services) are government services outside the NDIS that all Australians can access and benefit from, regardless of whether or not they have a disability. They include things like health care, education, transport, employment services, community housing, family and domestic violence services.
Navigation support	Find and access programs or services that meet their needs within a more complex service system.
NDIS	A national scheme for people with disability, administered by the National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA). The NDIS provides funding to eligible Australians with disability to gain more time with family and friends, greater independence, access to

Term	Definition
	new skills, jobs, or volunteering in their community, and an improved quality of life.
Neurodiversity	Neurodiversity is a term that is used to describe the natural range of diversity that exists in human neurodevelopment. Although all people process the world differently, some differences are grouped and named. The neurodiversity of a community arises from the presence of different brain types (also known as ‘neurotypes’). There is a majority neurotype (known as ‘neurotypical’) and there are minority neurotypes (known as ‘neurodivergent’). Well-known forms of neurodivergence include autism, Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), and learning differences (such as dyslexia).
Peer Support	When people use their shared experiences to connect and help each other.
Permanent disability	A 'permanent disability' means a person's disability is, or is likely to be lifelong
Targeted Foundational Supports	This is a category of Foundational Support. These supports operate between inclusive mainstream services (for example in areas like ECEC settings, schools) and the specialist supports accessed through the NDIS. These supports will be focused on helping certain groups of people that are not accessing or not eligible for support that is delivered through the NDIS, in areas where the need is greatest.
Self-Advocacy	When a person with disability is empowered to speak up and represents themselves and their interests in matters that affect them.
Significant disability	A 'significant disability' means a disability with a substantial impact on a person's functional capacity to complete everyday activities.

Appendix B

What governments have agreed

In December 2021, the then Prime Minister, First Ministers from all states and territories and the President of the Australian Local Government Association agreed to Australia's Disability Strategy 2021-31. The Strategy sets 31 policy priorities to drive access and inclusion of mainstream service systems like:

- early childhood
- schools
- health and mental health
- housing
- transport
- justice
- supporting inclusion within the community.

All governments remain focused on progressing the necessary reform to achieve the Strategy's vision and goals, and to review and update the Strategy to take account of the findings of the Disability Royal Commission. States and territories have also developed disability plans that support the achievement of the Strategy's vision in areas of state and territory responsibility.

In December 2023, National Cabinet agreed additional joint reforms to support people with disability across Australia. This included:

- implementing legislative changes to the NDIS to improve the experience of participants, and to restore the original intent of the Scheme to support people with permanent and significant disability, within a broader ecosystem of supports; and
- designing and jointly funding additional supports to those that are provided through the NDIS and inclusive mainstream services.

The delivery of Foundational Support could look to be delivered in a child's or family's natural settings where appropriate and phased in over time. This may include new or reformed programs.

The Foundational Supports Strategy will be considered by National Cabinet later in 2024.

Foundational Supports for children, families, carers and kin

Governments are working together to design and deliver additional supports in the community. These are known as Foundational Supports. They are additional supports to mainstream services and the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS).

This information sheet is about **Foundational Supports for children with developmental concern, delay and/or disability, and their families, carers and kin**.

Why Foundational Supports for children are needed

An independent review of the NDIS found current services and supports for children with developmental delay or concern and their families, need to be better. It also found the support system around the NDIS needs to be stronger.

In 2021, 1 in 5 children were developmentally vulnerable in one or more areas of the Australian Early Development Census by the time they reach school. Approximately a quarter of all NDIS participants are children younger than 9.

There is a clear need for extra supports for children with developmental delay or concern, or disability, under 9. These supports also need to extend to the whole family and those who care for children. This is where Foundational Supports comes in.

What might Foundational Supports include?

Foundational Supports will help children under 9 with developmental concern, delay and/or disability. They will also give their families and carers the tools and information they need to support a child to learn and play at home and in the community.

There are 2 types of Foundational Supports focused on supporting children.

General Foundational Supports:

- **Accessible information** to connect children and their families to the right supports for them – like peer support groups, or social and emotional support for parents and carers.
- **Giving families and carers the tools and information they need to support their children**. This could include help to navigate services, support with setting up routines, access to short courses and practical parent support workshops or programs.

Targeted Foundational Supports:

Targeted supports operate between mainstream services (e.g. in areas like early childhood education and care (ECEC) settings and schools) and the specialist supports accessed through the NDIS. They might include specific supports like:

- **Support from allied health** including one off or low intensity access to speech pathology, physiotherapy, psychology, occupational therapy or other services.
- **One off or low-cost assistive technology** that can make a child's everyday life easier and safer.
- **One-on-one support for people caring for children by giving them skills and information**. This could include self-advocacy skills, connecting families with supports and services, practical strategies and emotional support.

How will these extra supports help?

- Children are supported earlier with help that best meets their needs.
- Families and carers connect with, and access supports and services, that best support their child and family.
- Service providers and professionals can give better support to children with developmental concern, delay and/or disability and their families and carers.

Have your say

We want to know what you think could be included in Foundational Supports for children with developmental delay or concern, and how they might work.

For example, we want to know:

- How you get information and advice about support you or your child might need and how to access it?
- How you can be supported to connect with and navigate services, make decisions, and take part in the community?
- What the barriers are to getting support for your child or family?
- What additional supports you need and what that might look like?
- How supports outside of the NDIS could work better together including with mainstream settings like schools and childcare?

Have your say or find out more:

- Visit engage.dss.gov.au/foundational-supports
- Contact Foundational.Supports@dss.gov.au

Foundational Supports

General Supports Consultation Paper

Part 1: This paper commences national consultations on Foundational Supports. Future consultations will address other areas of Foundational Supports.

September 2024

Australian Government

Contents

Acknowledgement of country

The Australian Government Department of Social Services acknowledges Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples throughout Australia and their continuing connection to land, water, culture and community. We pay our respects to the Elders both past and present.

About this consultation paper

This consultation paper is one of a number of ways people with disability, their families, carers, kin, and other stakeholders can inform the design and implementation of additional supports to those that are delivered through the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) or mainstream services.

There is an Easy Read version of this consultation paper and an Auslan video on our website at General Supports | engage.dss.gov.au.

This paper focuses on the design of information, advice and supports aimed at helping to build the capacity of all people with disability, and where appropriate their families, carers and kin, to fully participate in the community, and to make decisions and advocate on issues that affect them. In this paper, this collection of supports are called General Supports.

There are other General Supports not covered in this paper. This paper does not cover advocacy (other than self-advocacy) as this type of support is already being dealt with through the National Disability Advocacy Framework 2023-2025. Navigation supports and ‘targeted’ supports for particular groups will be included in future consultation activities.

Note for service providers: Any future funding opportunities will be promoted via normal procurement/commissioning and grant round mechanisms and will take into account transitional arrangements associated with reforms to existing programs. As the concepts in this paper have not yet been agreed by governments, they have no status within the provider market and should not be relied upon.

A Glossary of terms is provided at **Appendix A**.

Have your say

The Australian Government is seeking your feedback on the questions in this consultation paper. Your views and insights will be used to inform all governments on the design and implementation of additional supports.

You can provide your feedback via the DSS Engage website. We encourage you to complete the short, guided questionnaire form. In this form you can also make a submission by uploading, emailing us a video or audio file.

If you would like to email a submission you can send it to foundationalsupports@thesocialdeck.com

Other ways to have your say

There will be more opportunities to share your views over the coming months, including on other areas of supports.

To register your interest in future engagement and consultations, please email us at Foundational.Supports@dss.gov.au.

Privacy notice

The Department of Social Services (the department) is inviting you to provide feedback on the questions in this consultation paper to help inform governments around the design of additional supports to those that are delivered through the NDIS and mainstream services.

The department will collect information from you directly when you submit responses to the questions in this consultation paper. This information will be used to inform the development of additional supports.

By lodging a response, whether through the survey or an email to the department, you consent to your response being analysed by the department or agency responsible for disability policy in each state and territory, and by a third-party provider, The Social Deck, on behalf of governments.

You can view our full privacy notice by clicking here.

Accessibility

A mix of different ways to engage are available so you have a choice about how you want to contribute to this important reform. This includes online events and in-person events in some locations. When you register for events, we encourage you to let us know if you have any accessibility requests that would help you to take part in and contribute during the event.

If you would like to discuss other ways to contribute, you can contact The Social Deck at foundationalsupports@thesocialdeck.com

Language in this consultation paper

We acknowledge that people use different words to talk about disability. Each person will have a way of talking about disability or about themselves that they like best. Some people like to use ‘disabled person’ (identity-first language), while some like to use ‘person with disability’ (person-first language), and some are fine with using either.

We use person-first language to talk about disability. This means we usually use the term ‘person with disability’ in this consultation paper. The language used in this consultation paper is not intended to diminish an individual’s identity as a person with disability.

We recognise that the appropriate use of language varies between individuals and disability communities. We acknowledge the importance of having conversations with individuals about their preferred language.

A commitment by all Australian Governments

All Australian Governments have committed to significant reforms to build an inclusive Australian society where people with disability can fulfil their potential as equal members of the community.

Thousands of people with disability and their families, carers and kin told the Independent Review into the NDIS that there is a need for improved inclusion and accessibility of mainstream services, improvements to the way the NDIS works and for additional supports to be delivered in two areas:

- 'general' supports that deliver access to trusted information and advice and build the capacity of all people with disability. These are being designed for people with disability aged under 65 to fully participate in the community, and to make decisions and advocate on issues that impact them but would not exclude those over 65 from accessing or benefiting from general information. This also includes information, advice and supports for families, carers and kin, and community organisations where appropriate; and
- 'targeted' supports that operate between inclusive mainstream services (for example in areas like early childhood, schools and community mental health) and the specialist supports accessed through the NDIS. These supports will be focused on helping certain groups of people that are not accessing or not eligible for support that is delivered through the NDIS, in areas where the need is greatest.

The Australian Government and state and territory governments have agreed to implement additional supports to those that are delivered through the NDIS and mainstream services – referred to as Foundational Supports. You can read more about what governments have agreed at **Appendix B**. Importantly, governments acknowledge the importance of ensuring the design and implementation of additional supports is informed by the needs and lived experience of people with disability, their families, carers and kin.

This consultation paper is one way that governments are working to inform the community about this important reform and to provide an opportunity for you to contribute your ideas to the design and implementation of additional supports.

As we progress this important reform, governments will work to ensure there is good community and sector understanding of:

- when new or additional services and supports are going to be available
- who they are designed to benefit and support
- how they can be accessed; and
- any transitional arrangements.

We will also be clear with the community about how additional supports will be implemented and who will have responsibility for them once these details have been agreed between the Australian Government and state and territory governments.

We will monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of programs, services and supports to ensure they support good outcomes for the people that access them.

Focus of this paper

This paper focuses on information, advice and capacity building supports for people with disability aged under 65, within a broader General Supports service mix. Feedback on this process will inform the reform of an existing program known as the Information, Linkages and Capacity Building (ILC) program and other additional information, advice and capacity building supports. These types of supports are delivered through a range and combination of channels, including online, via the phone and in-person (groups or one-on-one) depending on the nature of the support

What are information, advice and capacity building supports

These are designed to help people with disability participate more fully and go beyond the reasonable adjustments expected from inclusive and accessible mainstream and community supports. This includes:

- trusted information about disability, rights, and services to empower people with disability
- supports and tools that build the skills, capacity and independence of individuals to make and sustain social networks and community connections, to make decisions (including supported decisions) and to advocate on issues that impact them
- information, advice and supports that empower and build the capacity of families, carers, and kin in supporting people with disability to participate and exercise choice and control over their own lives
- assistance to find and access mainstream, community or disability-specific services and activities appropriate to needs and goals
- information and advice that assist community organisations and non-government public services/activities to become more inclusive and responsive to the needs of people with disability.

Once fully implemented, supports will be available nationally, fully accessible and where appropriate, tailored to meet the needs of diverse communities. For example, First Nations people with disability and culturally and linguistically diverse people with disability; or for particular population groups, such people with intellectual disability or psychosocial disability. They will also be designed to connect with other services and tap into local community knowledge and networks. Accessing General Support would not preclude someone from accessing the NDIS or other supports in the community.

Intended outcomes

General Supports are intended to provide outcomes for people with disability, their families, carers, and kin and for community organisations and non-government groups.

For **people with disability**:

- greater independence, autonomy and dignity
- peer and social connection and access to the community
- improved access to trusted information and support for decision-making
- improved awareness of rights, and the ability to advocate to ensure their rights and needs are met
- access to services that are relevant to needs and goals.

For **parents, carers, families and kin**:

- increased awareness around disability and the rights of people with disability
- increased knowledge and skills to support the choice, opportunities, independence and decision-making of people with disability
- peer and social connection.

For **organisations, groups and non-government entities servicing the community**:

- increased organisational and worker awareness about disability and the rights of people with disability
- services and community activities that are more responsive, accessible and meet the needs of the diversity of people with disability and their families, carers and kin.

Your views

Questions about scope and intended outcomes

We are interested in hearing from people with disability, the community and service providers about:

1. Is the broad focus and scope of information, advice and capacity building supports aligned to what you would expect? Are there any gaps?

2. Are the intended outcomes the right ones? Are there any gaps? How would you measure them or like to see progress and improvements measured?

Designing General Supports

This paper seeks to explore in more detail what the following categories of supports could look like:

- information, advice and referral
- capacity building supports.

Why is change needed?

Governments recognise that to best support the needs of people with disability and their families, carers and kin, there needs to be a strong system of support for the many people with disability that are not accessing or not eligible for supports that are delivered through the NDIS. This is in addition to making changes to improve the NDIS and continuing to improve the inclusion and accessibility of mainstream services that all Australians rely on.

People with disability, their families, carers, kin, representative organisations and providers have identified issues with the way some current services and supports operate and opportunities to strengthen the current system. The Australian Government has agreed to reform the ILC program as one component of a broader information, advice and capacity building support offering within ‘General Supports’ (see **Appendix C** for more background).

A reformed information, advice and referral service offering

The commitment by governments to establish additional supports to those delivered through the NDIS and mainstream services, will build on a reformed ILC program with additional or enhanced programs and initiatives that offer information, advice and referral-type supports. These will:

- be well connected and coordinated
- consider how online, digital, phone-based and in-person solutions can operate together as part of a continuum
- include trusted information and advice at a state/territory and local level, in addition to national information
- enable the effective sharing of resources developed by and for the disability community
- be tailored to the needs of particular groups
- be visible within community.

The potential service offering

The potential service offering could include:

- the provision of accurate, up-to-date, information and advice that is trustworthy and high quality on disability, child development, disability rights and evidence-based supports. Where possible this would entail linking to existing resources and reputable evidenced-based sites.
- digital, telephone and virtual services that help people with disability, their families, carers and kin to understand supports that may be available to them
- information and advice that is relevant to individuals, based on their location, experience of disability, and intersectional identity.

As part of thinking about what this service offer may look like, consideration will also need to be given to where there are existing platforms or services that would be leveraged, repurposed or improved. The new model would include processes to disseminate and promote information and resources widely for greater utility and uptake by the disability community and across relevant service and support sectors.

The service offering could seek to ensure that people learn about these additional supports through the various channels that people access information through, including government and other reputable and trusted websites, health services, providers and other local connections.

What would this look like to me?

This could look like a single website, digital app, online chat and/or phone service that provides or links you to quality information, tools or resources about disability, or childhood development, and links or refers you to local supports and services. The website might house (or have links to) tools and resources that are developed by and for the disability community, or through local organisations funded to update or fill the gap where there isn't already quality information on a particular topic. There might also be in-person and/or physical resources made available.

Information and advice will need to be provided to ensure there is adequate information at a local, state and national level as well as catering for people with disability, their families, carers and kin, and those with intersectional needs.

Design work will consider what type of information is most helpful, how information can best be presented in ways that are accessible and easy to find ,what existing sources of information exist and any gaps.

Your views

Questions about information, advice and referral

We are interested in hearing from **people with disability** and the **community** about:

1) What information and advice services do you currently use to help you understand, find and navigate the supports that are available to you?
   a) What would make finding and accessing the right supports easier?
   b) What do governments need to consider about supports for people who:
      i) do not have, or have limited access to, the internet and/or may not be digitally literate?
      ii) prefer to access in-person information from trusted sources in their community?

2) How could information and advice tools and resources be better tailored to meet the needs of:
   a) people with disability, including those who identify as First Nations, culturally and linguistically diverse, LGBTIQA+ SB, women and children and young people?
   b) people with disability who experience a range of varying support needs?
   c) people who are looking for disability supports for the first time?

3) What types of additional information and advice do you not currently have access to, or what is difficult to find, that would improve your day-to-day life?

4) Do you or have you used the Disability Gateway? If so, did it provide the information you wanted/needed? If not, what could have made it better?

5) Have you used the 1800 number provided through the Disability Gateway site? Did the support offered through the 1800 number help you? What worked well and how could it be improved?

6) What format do you like to access information and advice through, and what sources do you trust? For example, do you like accessing websites, apps, making phone calls or having in-person contact? Do you prefer to access services during business hours? Outside of business hours?

7) What types of information and advice supports work well in meeting your needs? How might this local information be improved?

8) When you received information, advice and referral supports from a service, what worked well and what could be improved?

9) What specific outcomes for people with disability and their families, carers and kin would you like to see measured to show improvements to information, advice and referral services over time?

We are also interested in hearing from **service providers** about:

10) In relation to information, advice and referral supports, what could help support innovation, quality and best practice in the delivery of these General Supports?

11) What would need to be considered to avoid market gaps in the availability of these types of general supports, including in lower population and regional and remote areas?

12) What does success look like and what resources or support do you think service providers need to better communicate achievements and needs?

A reformed capacity building service offering

The commitment by governments to establish additional supports to those that are delivered through the NDIS will build on a reformed ILC program. This reflects that over and above what this program delivers, there are a range of different kinds of capacity building support required for individuals, families, carers, kin, and communities. A reformed capacity building program should seek to offer:

- consistency and equity of access to particular support types across the nation, such as peer support that is tailored to meet the needs and experiences of disability-specific or intersectional experiences
- longer-term access to skills building support for people with disability, their families, carers and kin
- information and advice that lifts the capacity of community organisations, services activities to be responsive to the needs of people with disability and to improve accessibility and inclusion
- evaluation processes that are embedded in design to support the sharing of best-practice from funded capacity building projects, to capitalise on investments made, help uplift sector-wide capacity, and inform future investment.

The proposed service offering

Individual and family capacity building supports can help improve the ability of people with disability, and their families, carers and kin, to have the information, skills and confidence to fully and effectively participate in society, and to access and benefit from mainstream services and supports.

Complementing this, well-designed and delivered community capacity building supports can lead to:

- greater independence and rights awareness of people with disability and social connection between people with and without disability
- people with disability using the same mainstream services, community supports and activities as everyone else
- mainstream services and community supports and activities delivering services that are appropriate to needs of people with disability
- mainstream services and communities becoming advocates and leaders in inclusive and accessible practices.

For individuals	For families, carers and kin	For communities
• empowering individuals with disability by helping them build skills, capabilities, and confidence to participate in their community • building autonomy and rights awareness, helping individuals advocating for their rights • increasing connection and access to support networks • national and state-wide supports and initiatives tailored to disability-specific and intersectional communities.	• helping empower and build capabilities, knowledge, understanding of families, carers and kin around disability and disability rights to (further) increase their ability to support their loved ones with disability • national and state-wide supports and initiatives tailored to disability-specific and intersectional communities • helping families with the skills and tools to help their family member with disability to make their own decisions, connect with the community and exercise independence.	• building capability of community organisations (e.g. sporting clubs, arts groups) and at the whole-of-community level to deliver disability-inclusive and accessible services • driving equitable access to quality and inclusive community services • targeting local community needs • complimenting (rather than substituting) other current/future government initiatives • increasing community understanding of rights, obligations and barriers for people with disability, including education and awareness raising, to transform to an inclusive society.

Consideration could be being given to:

- opportunities for funding longer-term programs offering services and activities focused under three core streams — individual, family and community capacity building
- ways for providers to share and scale up promising practice and better measure outcomes (not outputs)
- taking steps for services to be able to connect, develop and learn from one another to build a more effective service network that enables systemic change
- taking a more deliberate and systematic approach to support people with disability, and where appropriate their families, carers and kin, across Australia to ensure equitable access, and to make sure supports are not disproportionately concentrated in particular geographic areas
- designing support for different intersectional groups with particular needs, and with a greater focus on:
  - supported decision-making
  - peer support
  - capacity building for families and caregivers of children with developmental concerns and disability
  - supports for young people at life’s key transition points.

What could this look like for me?

For individuals, this might look like improved access to peer support groups or group information sessions. This might also include projects that support:

- self-advocacy and rights awareness
- supported decision-making
- leadership development
- relationship building
- life skills development.

It may also focus on particular groups within the broader disability community, such as people with intellectual disability and First Nations people with disability.

These supports would be focused on:

- reducing isolation
- facilitating networks so people with disability can learn from the experience of others
- empowering people to self-advocate for their rights
- supporting people to participate in their community.

There could also be a focus on supports being delivered by people with disability such as neurodiverse affirming or other disability-specific organisations that promote contemporary models of disability, positive visioning and inclusion.

For families, carers and kin this might look like better information, peer support, parenting groups and workshops, education and training (i.e. online or in-person parenting courses). This would have a focus on:

- disability and rights awareness
- building skills in decision-support
- enabling independence and participation
- family leadership and development.

These supports would be focused on helping families, carers and kin of a person with disability to build their own knowledge and skills so they can support the person with disability to exercise choice and control and fully participate.

Community capacity building would focus on building the capability of community organisations (e.g. sporting clubs, arts groups) and at the whole-of-community level to deliver disability-inclusive and accessible services. Projects would focus on driving equitable access to quality and inclusive community services. They would complement (rather than substitute) current/future government initiatives.

Information, advice and projects would be focused on ensuring providers understand and meet their responsibilities and are better equipped to be inclusive for people with disability.

Sector capacity

In addition to these three streams, governments are exploring what support, if any, may be required to support new and emerging practice, and encourage evidence-informed innovation. This could take the form of commissioned projects that respond to new and emerging issues. It could also focus on uplift to enable organisations to deliver safe and inclusive services to people, including people with intersectional experiences of disability.

Consideration is also being given to how the community, and community sector can help provide state and territory and local insights to inform an understanding of needs within communities. This would include understanding emerging needs and trends to inform the focus of programs and activities funded. Appropriate monitoring and reporting mechanisms (including evaluations) would help us know what works, with those who access these supports given the opportunity to formally contribute to feedback and evidence gathering.

Your views

Questions about capacity building supports

We are interested in hearing from people with disability, their families, carers and kin about:

1. What type of supports would help you make and maintain community connections and be involved in your community?
2. What capacity building supports would be helpful or have you found helpful? If you are comfortable to share, what was the particular ‘focus’ of this support (i.e. was it about a specific skill or supporting people with a particular disability)?
3. What kinds of decision-making supports and supports for self-advocacy do you think are needed? What kinds of supports could help you (or have helped you) build autonomy, exercise your rights to voice concerns, access information, resolve issues or improve your ability to make choices?
4. What supports can help families, carers and kin to support their loved ones with disability?
5. What services and supports are needed to improve the capacity of communities to be inclusive, accessible and welcoming spaces for people with disability?
6. What kind of things should governments consider so that we can ensure services are well tailored for people with disability who:
    a. identify as First Nations, culturally and linguistically diverse, LGBTIQA+SB, women, children and young people
    b. are entering particular stages of life
    c. experience a range of varying support needs
    d. live in rural and remote areas
7. What specific outcomes for people with disability and their families, carers and kin would you like to see measured to demonstrate accountability over time?

For organisations and the broader sector

1. Are there critical or immediate sector capacity challenges or opportunities that should be considered as part of initial reforms? How would you propose these challenges or opportunities be addressed?
2. Are there things that have worked well, or you have seen work well, to find suitable workers and develop the skills of the workforce to deliver services like the ones outlined in this consultation paper?
3. What could help support innovation, quality and best practice in the delivery of these supports?
4. What would need to be considered to avoid market gaps in the availability of supports, including in lower population and regional and remote areas?

What next?

We will analyse what people with disability and the community tell us through this engagement process. This includes what you tell us about the ideas in this consultation paper and your response to the discussion questions.

We will also be seeking your views through a range of other ways such as:

- an online questionnaire
- online roundtables and discussions
- in-person conversations in some locations.

We know people like to give feedback in different ways. You can give us feedback through one or all of these methods.

We will also consult later on additional topics under Foundational Supports.

We will use this information to inform and refine the design of these additional supports.

Engagement

Engaging with people with disability, their families, carers, kin, representative organisations and service providers on your views.

We will engage on some topics first rather than everything at once as there are a number of different disability related reforms underway.

This engagement is about information, advice and capacity building supports.

Review what you have told us

The Australian Government and state and territory governments will consider carefully what you have told us about the topics included in this paper and about other topics people raise through this process.

Planning for implementation and commissioning

The Australian Government and state and territory governments will work with people with disability and the sector to plan for implementation. We will commission new or reformed services and supports and consider how people will access these supports into the future.

Supports become available

New/reformed General Supports will start to come in from mid-2025, and will build over time.

NOW

Next

Appendix A

Please note: this glossary is included to assist readers to understand some of the ideas and options presented in this paper. The definitions have no formal status. Any feedback on the terms included in the glossary, or views on terms that may be missing, is welcomed.

Term	Definition
Advocacy	This works to promote and protect the rights of people with disability by helping to remove barriers to their full and equal participation in the community. This consultation paper focuses on self-advocacy only.
Capacity building	Increasing people's knowledge, skills and abilities. For example, developing someone's skills in a certain area to allow them to live more independently.
Carers	A person or persons who provide care or support for a person or persons with disability or child or children (where there are concerns about their development) and is not a paid support worker.
Community capacity building	Increasing the ability of an organisation/s that delivers community services or activities to be more inclusive, through information, advice, education, and sharing of better practice.
Community organisations	Any organisation engaged in charitable or other community-based activity operating under Australian law and not established for the purpose of making a profit (and not a government entity).
Community services and activities	These are services delivered by community organisations for the community which deliver a range of benefits. They generally provide support and assistance to individuals, families and groups, or run activities, to maximise their potential and enhance community wellbeing.
Developmental delay	Broadly, developmental delay refers to a delay in a child's development. It means that a child finds it much harder to do everyday things that other children their age can do (this might mean they are not meeting their expected developmental milestones in terms of their physical, emotional, social, communication and thinking skills). Developmental delay might be short term or long term.
Disability	There are a range of ways to understand disability and how people experience disability. The social model of disability recognises attitudes, practices and structures can be disabling and act as barriers preventing people from fulfilling their potential and exercising their rights as equal members of the community.

Term	Definition
	This aligns with the United Nations *Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities*, which provides that disability results from the 'interaction between persons with impairments and attitudinal and environmental barriers hindering full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others'.
Early intervention	Providing support to a child or person with disability as early as possible to build skills and independence, reducing the impacts of disability or developmental delay in its interaction with the environment.
General Supports	This is a category of support. This includes trusted information and advice, supports that build the capacity of all people with disability aged under 65, including support to make decisions and advocate on issues that impact them and to connect with others and the community. This also includes information, advice and supports for families, carers and community organisations where appropriate. It also includes support to find information, although this is not included in this paper.
Family capacity building	This is a subcategory of support that is focused on helping families, carers and kin of a person with disability to build their own knowledge and skills so they can better support the person with disability to exercise choice, control and independence and to participate in their community.
Foundational Supports	Governments are working together to design and deliver additional supports in the community. These additional supports are called Foundational Supports. These are specific supports that would be available to people that are not accessing or not eligible for supports that are delivered through the NDIS, to help people with disability and their families and carers. These are supports that offer more help than what is offered through mainstream or community services.
Information, Linkages and Capacity Building program	A grants program managed by the Australian Government Department of Social Services providing funding to organisations to deliver projects in the community that benefit all Australians with disability, their carers and families. See: www.dss.gov.au/disability-and-carers-programs-services-for-people-with-disability/information-linkages-and-capacity-building-ilc-program
Independent Review into the NDIS	An independent review to put people with disability back at the centre of the NDIS. The purpose of the review was to restore trust, confidence and pride in the NDIS. The review looked at:

Term	Definition
	• the design, operations and sustainability of the NDIS • how to build a more responsive, supportive and sustainable NDIS market and workforce. See: www.ndisreview.gov.au
Mainstream services	Mainstream services (also known as universal or essential services) are government services delivered outside the NDIS that all Australians can access and benefit from, regardless of whether or not they have a disability. They include things like health care, education, transport, employment services, community housing, and family and domestic violence services.
Navigation support	Assistance provided to a person with disability to help them find and access programs or services that meet their needs within a complex service system.
Neuro-affirming	An approach that affirms an individual's neurodivergent identity by embracing their understanding of people and the world, without seeking to change or 'fix' them.
National Disability Insurance Scheme	A national scheme for people with disability, administered by the National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA). The NDIS provides funding to eligible Australians with disability to gain more time with family and friends, greater independence, access to new skills, jobs, or volunteering in their community, and an improved quality of life.
Peer support	When people use their shared experiences to connect and help each other.
Psychosocial disability	Arises from the interaction between a person with a long-term mental health condition (that may be episodic) and attitudinal and environmental barriers that hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others.
Psychosocial supports	Supports for people with psychosocial disability to rebuild and maintain connections, manage daily activities, build social skills and participate in education and employment
Targeted Supports	This is another category of support. Targeted Foundational Supports will operate between inclusive mainstream services (in areas like early childhood and schools) and specialist supports accessed through the NDIS. These supports will be focused on helping certain groups of

Term	Definition
	people that are not accessing or not eligible for support that is delivered through the NDIS, in areas where the need is greatest.
Self-advocacy	When a person with disability is empowered to speak up and represents themselves and their interests in matters that affect them.
Supported decision-making	This is a type of formal or informal support to help make sure the will and preferences of a person with disability is respected and upheld in a decision-making process, rather than the decision being made by someone else. It can include access to accessible information and other adjustments to help people with disability make their own decisions.
Support networks	The connections between individuals and groups, such as with family, friends, neighbours, and other members of a person's community, that create and give a sense of belonging. They are a trusted way of finding important information and support.

Appendix B

What governments have agreed

In December 2021, the then Prime Minister, First Ministers from all states and territories and the President of the Australian Local Government Association agreed to Australia's Disability Strategy 2021-31 (the Strategy). Australia's Disability Strategy sets 31 policy priorities to drive access and inclusion across mainstream service systems like early childhood, schools, health and mental health, housing, transport and justice, as well supporting inclusion within the community. All governments remain focused on progressing the necessary reform to achieve the Strategy's vision and goals, and to review and update the Strategy to take account of the findings of the Disability Royal Commission. States and territories have also developed disability plans that support the achievement of the Strategy's vision in areas of state and territory responsibility.

In December 2023, National Cabinet agreed additional joint reforms to support people with disability across Australia. This included:

- implementing legislative changes to the NDIS to improve the experience of participants
- restoring the original intent of the NDIS to support people with permanent and significant disability, within a broader ecosystem of supports
- designing and jointly funding additional supports to those that are provided through the NDIS.

The delivery of Foundational Support would look to be delivered through existing government service settings where appropriate and phased in over time. This may include new or reformed programs.

The detailed scope of supports will be set out in a Foundational Support Strategy to be agreed by governments later in 2024.

Appendix C

What type of information, advice and capacity building supports are available now?

There are a range of existing services and supports that assist people with disability and their families. These include:

- Information Linkages and Capacity Building Program (ILC). The ILC program delivers community projects funded by the Australian Government Department of Social Services which benefit all Australians with disability, their families, carers and kin. ILC comprises of four programs:
    - Individual Capacity Building
    - National Information Program
    - Economic and Community Participation
    - Mainstream Capacity Building.

- Partners in the Community Program. Partners in the Community are community organisations that have been commissioned by the NDIA to deliver a number of supports for people with disability. These supports have primarily focused on supporting people to understand and access the NDIS, assist with plan development and implementation and linking people with supports. They have also supported some people with disability, and some families of children under 9 with developmental concerns, that are not NDIS participants, find and connect with early supports.

- Disability Gateway. The Disability Gateway is a national website and contact centre that centralises information about the supports and services available to people with disability, their families and carers. It provides a single point of information on disability services and supports and assists people with disability to navigate current support systems, and in doing so, enables greater choice and control.

In addition, the Australian Government and state and territory governments fund various supports that focus on providing services and assistance in regard to (but not limited to) information, inclusion, advocacy, disability, child development and capacity building for people with disability. These services and supports vary depending on where you live.

Why is change needed?

Governments recognise that to best support the needs of people with disability, their families, carers and kin, there needs to be a strong ecosystem of support for the many people with disability beyond the supports that are delivered through the NDIS. This is in addition to improving the NDIS and continuing to make mainstream services more inclusive and accessible. At present, there are limited supports focused on early intervention, prevention or low intensity support needs for certain groups of people with disability that are not accessing or not eligible for support through the NDIS.

People with disability, their families, carers, kin, representative organisations and providers have also identified ways that current services and supports could be strengthened and improved.

The reforms identified in this consultation paper will seek to address these issues by reforming some existing programs and services and establishing and investing in additional and enhanced supports and services.

Foundational Supports

General Supports

Governments are working together to design and deliver additional supports in the community. These are known as Foundational Supports. They are specific supports that are additional to mainstream services and supports accessed through the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS).

This information sheet is about **General Supports**.

What might General Supports include?

Information and advice

Access to quality information and advice about disability.

Information on disability supports available to people and their families/carers and kin, including help to find and connect with the right supports for their needs.

Capacity building

For individuals: Improved access to peer support groups, support around self-advocacy, rights awareness, decision-making, leadership development, relationship building and life skills development.

For families and carers: Peer support, parenting groups and workshops, education and training, building skills in advocacy and rights-awareness, family leadership and development.

Community: Building the capability of community organisations (like sporting clubs, arts groups) and at the whole-of-sector or community level to deliver disability-inclusive and accessible services. Projects would focus on providing advice and resources that support equitable access to quality and inclusive community services for people with disability.

Who are General Supports for?

General Supports will prioritise the support needs of people with disability under 65, however people over 65 will likely benefit from some General Supports (such as information).

The way that information and advice will be delivered as part of General Supports will consider the different needs of the disability community as well as the needs of families/carers and kin.

General Supports will also be tailored to meet the needs of diverse communities. For example, supports to meet the needs of First Nations people with disability and culturally and linguistically diverse people with disability, and the LGBTIQA+SB disabled community. It may also be tailored for particular groups of people, such as people with intellectual disability.

Why do we need General Supports?

General Supports can:

- provide current and accessible information to better connect people to the right supports for them
- empower families and carers to support their family members with disability
- support individuals to build and sustain social networks and community connections
- support individuals to make decisions and advocate for their needs
- make sure community organisations and non-government services and activities are equipped to respond to the needs of people with disability.

More information

We are engaging with people about what should be included in General Supports and how they might work.

- To find out more **visit** engage.dss.gov.au/foundational-supports
- You can also contact **Foundational.Supports@dss.gov.au**.