



Australasian Society for Developmental Paediatrics

29 September 2023  
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To: Standing Committee on Community Affairs Legislation Committee

Re: Australasian Society for Developmental Paediatrics (ASDP) submission to the **Inquiry into the Disability Services and Inclusion Bill 2023 [Provisions] and Disability Services and Inclusion (Consequential Amendments and Transitional Provisions) Bill 2023 (the Bills)**

Thank you for the opportunity to provide input, bringing the developmental paediatric perspective, to the Legislation Committee of the Standing Committee on Community Affairs. The ASDP (formerly the NBPSA) is a membership organisation for doctors, including paediatricians, general practitioners and child psychiatrists who have a specialist interest in working with children with developmental difficulties or disorders, their families and carers. The majority of Society members are paediatricians who care for children and adolescents with intellectual disability, as well as other diagnoses. Paediatricians are responsible for diagnosis and management of the majority of children with developmental difficulties or disorders children in Australia.

We support the proposed Bills as they relate to a broad definition of 'people with disability'. However, the needs of children with developmental issues and disability are significantly different to those of adults, and don't receive specific recognition within the proposed Bills. The Bills will better serve affected children, as well as their families and carers, with specific inclusions which address their unique needs.

#### **The developing nature of children necessitates special consideration within the Bills.**

Neurodiverse children have varying levels of disability arising from complex, brain-based conditions. These conditions can change rapidly as a child develops. The early years can decide the degree of disability a child may face as an adult. While employing a social model for care, children with neuro-disability have multiple needs that require a team approach with input from health, education and other professionals.

#### **Consideration of the developmental context of disability supports and services across the age range.**

For some children, an accurate diagnosis may not be clear, or even possible, early in their life course. For many children with developmental disability, research suggests that it is important that complexity, including psychosocial context, is considered, with therapy targeted at the child holistically rather than at any particular symptom. Therefore, integration of services with consideration of educational needs is important, as is the consideration of support needs of both the child with disability and their other family members and carers.

#### **Convention on the Rights of the Child**

The preamble of the Convention on the Rights of the Child states that "the child...needs special safeguards and care, including appropriate legal protection...". It further identifies, in many of its articles, the protections and considerations which ought to be made to children. Article 23.3

Neurodevelopmental and Behavioural Paediatric Society of Australasia t/as

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outlines that assistance extended to children with disability should “be designed to ensure that the disabled child has effective access to and receives education, training, health care services, rehabilitation services, preparation for employment and recreation opportunities in a manner conducive to the child's achieving the fullest possible social integration and individual development...”.

It is the firm view of the ASDP that the needs and considerations for children with disability differ to those of adults. We strongly advocate for the inclusion of specific references to the developmental needs of children with disability within the Bills.

We would welcome the opportunity to provide further input to support our position.

Kind regards,

Dr Katie Heathershaw  
President  
ASDP

Dr Samantha Kaiser  
Chair, Advocacy Committee  
ASDP