

# National Disability Agreement Review

## Response from the Australian Bureau of Statistics

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The Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) welcomes the opportunity to support the work of the Productivity Commission's Review of the National Disability Agreement (NDA) through this submission. For inquiries about this submission please contact Suraksha Maharaj, Director, Disability, Ageing, Carers and Mental Health Statistics.

### Overview

The ABS is Australia's official national statistical agency. The role of the ABS is to inform Australia's important decisions by partnering and innovating to deliver relevant, trusted, objective data, statistics and insights. Identifying and responding to the needs of government and the community is a high priority for the ABS.

Measurement of NDA objectives and outcomes is supported by ABS data. The availability of high-quality, relevant data is essential for the assessment of the impact of changes now underway in the disability sector. The ABS notes the continuing need for high-quality disability statistics to support reporting requirements in relation to the provision of disability services in Australia. ABS also notes the importance of ongoing resourcing to enable the continued provision of important information on disability to the Australian Community.

### Current reporting

High-quality statistics are essential to support reporting on the use of and satisfaction with disability services for people with disability, and to inform decision-making around future policies and service delivery.

In Australia, comprehensive and high-quality disability prevalence data are collected in the Survey of Disability, Ageing and Carers (SDAC), along with information on access to disability services, experience of discrimination, social participation, health and wellbeing. This information is reported in the Productivity Commission's Report on Government Services (RoGS) and is used by governments and the community to better understand the needs of people with disability and their carers.

The SDAC has been conducted by the ABS since 1981. In response to the six year gap between the 2003 and 2009 SDACs and an increasing interest in disability in relation to the NDA and National Disability Strategy, the then Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs (FaHCSIA), the Department of Health and Ageing and the state and territory disability departments felt data were needed more frequently. Given the ABS was planning on running the SDAC only once in the 2010-2020 period (in 2015), agreement was reached between the Commonwealth, states and territories

that funding would be provided to enable the ABS to conduct surveys in 2012 and 2018 and that the sample for 2015 would be increased.

The 2018 SDAC, currently under enumeration, has been funded by the Commonwealth Department of Health, Commonwealth Department of Social Services, New South Wales Department of Family and Community Services, Victorian Department of Human Services, Queensland Department of Communities, Child Safety and Disability Services and Western Australian Department of Communities. Sample is distributed across jurisdictions to enable the production of representative national level estimates and state level estimates for the jurisdictions providing funding for the survey.

## Arrangements for future reporting

The agreement to fund triennial SDACs was for 2012, 2015 and 2018 and lapses at the end of 2019.

The ABS is currently transforming the way in which it conducts the Household Surveys Program. While the details of the timing of future disability surveys is yet to be determined, without further funding, it is likely that future outputs will revert to a six-yearly frequency and levels of reliability of estimates will decrease and be similar to those in the 2003 SDAC. This will make it difficult to reliably identify small movements in performance indicators at the state or territory level, even for the larger jurisdictions.

The ABS is currently undertaking a transformation program that will see enhancements to our statistical business systems and how we produce information for society. Given the transformation program will bring new opportunities for the creation of population statistics, the ABS is keen to partner with stakeholders to ensure the continued delivery of timely, relevant, disability statistics.

## SDAC and the NDIS

With the introduction of the NDIS there is an ongoing need for information on the equity, effectiveness and efficiency of government disability services in Australia. As the provision of disability services varies between jurisdictions, policy and implementation responses will need to be measured at the state and territory level. SDAC can provide information on a broad range of measures to assess the effectiveness of policy implementation across jurisdictions, depending on the level of funding available for the survey.

SDAC also has a significant role in measuring access to support and outcomes for people with disability who are not participating in the NDIS. There is an ongoing need for the collection of this information at the national and jurisdictional levels. The ABS recognises that with the national rollout of the NDIS and changes in the disability sector, future cycles of the SDAC should meet current and future information requirements of stakeholders. The ABS will actively engage and continue to work with stakeholders to ensure that these needs are met.

## ABS position

As Australia's national statistical agency, anticipating and responding to the changing information priorities of our stakeholders to ensure the relevance of our statistics is a critical component of our role. We look forward to partnering and collaborating with State, Territory and Commonwealth Governments to enable the continued delivery of the statistical information that Australia needs.