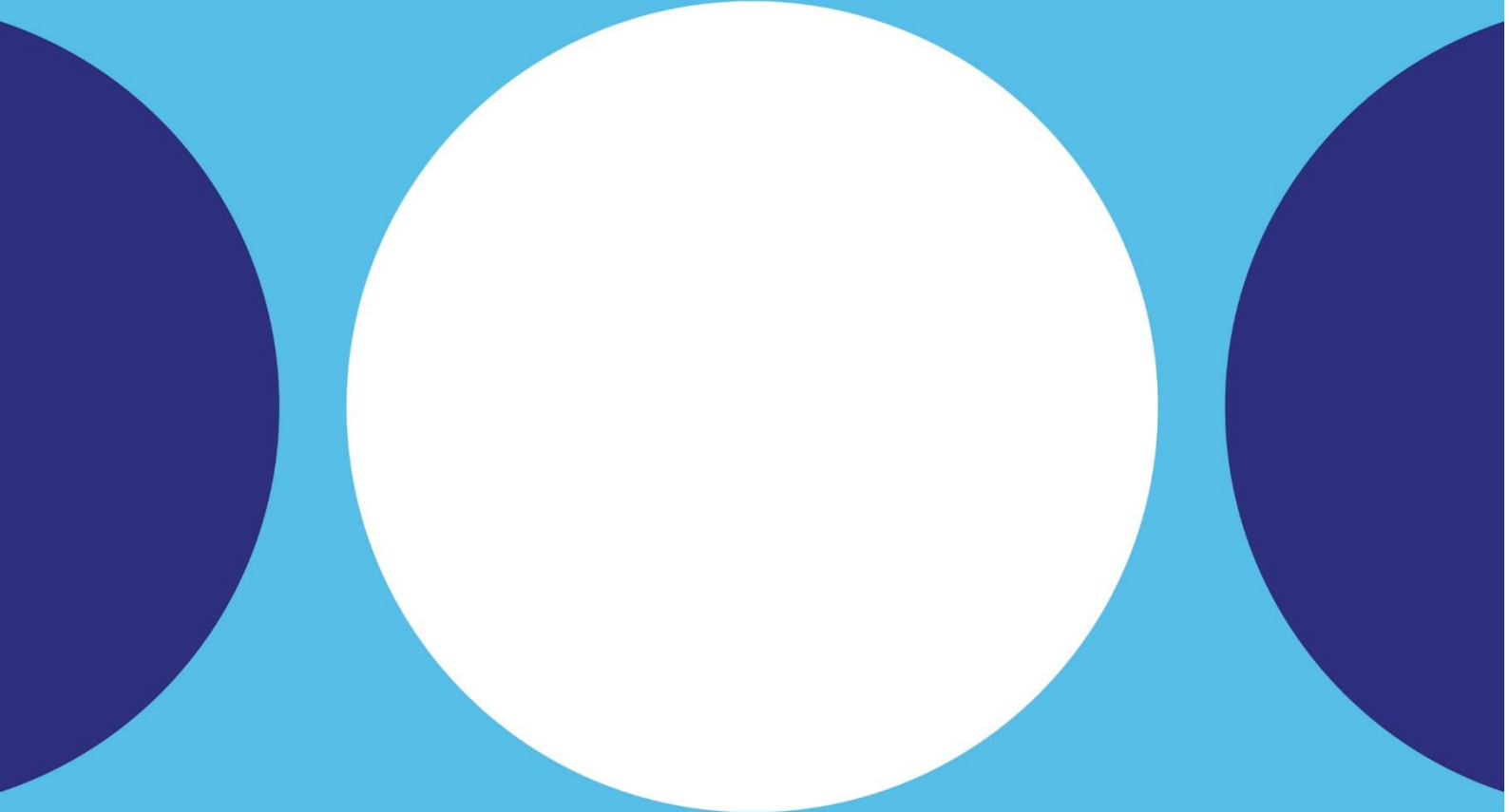


Helping local government
build stronger communities.



LGA Submission – Foundational Supports - General

December 2024

Introduction

About LGA South Australia

LGA South Australia (LGA) is the voice of local government in South Australia, representing all 68 councils across the state and the Anangu Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara.

The *Local Government Act 1999 (SA)* recognises the LGA as a public authority for the purpose of promoting and advancing the interests of local government. The LGA is also recognised in and has prescribed functions in 29 other South Australian Acts of Parliament. The LGA provides leadership, support, representation, and advocacy relevant to the needs of our member councils.

The LGA is a strong advocate for policies that achieve better outcomes for councils and the communities they represent. Councils are a partner in government and part of the solution. Working together we can make positive contributions to the health and wellbeing of our communities.

Acknowledgement

The LGA acknowledges the Traditional Owners of country throughout South Australia, and pays its respects to Elders past, present and emerging.

We acknowledge the unique cultural and spiritual relationships to the land, waters and seas and the rich contribution that First Nations people continue to make to our society.

The LGA operates on Kaurna land, and our work extends across many First Nations communities within South Australia.

We acknowledge that local government can learn from the deep feelings of attachment that First Nations people have to country and respect this relationship in the delivery of services to communities.

The LGA is committed to strengthening connections between First Nations people, councils and the broader community as the peak body for local government in South Australia.

LGA policy

The LGA has worked with our member councils to adopt policy positions, based on robust research and evidence base, to recognise their roles and identify how local government can be an important partner in government.

Policy Statement 3.4 – Community Services

Local government acknowledges that providing tailored support services for community groups with specific needs is key to creating equitable, cohesive communities, and that reinstatement, maintenance and increases in funding for these activities from federal and state government is vital to councils providing on-going services.

Policy Statement 3.4.4 – National Disability Insurance Scheme

Local government recognises that the rollout of the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) represents a major shift in the way that disability services are delivered and is concerned that new provisions may not be adequate. Local government shall continue to lobby federal/ state governments to ensure nobody 'falls through the gaps' as a result of these reforms.

Policy Statement 3.4.5 – Disability Inclusion Action Planning

Local government recognises the benefits of Disability Access and Inclusion Plans (DAIP) and ensuring adequate provisions for those with a disability are put in place. Local government shall continue to lobby for adequate resources to carry out the new statutory services contained in the Disability Inclusion Act 2018.

Policy Statement 3.4.6 – Access and Inclusion

Local government recognises the imperative in ensuring all individuals can access community services and facilities to tackle issues contributing to social exclusion. Councils shall continue to explore and implement strategies through planning and community functions that promote access and inclusion for all individuals.

Our submission

The LGA welcomes the opportunity to provide feedback to the [General Supports Consultation Paper](#) (Consultation Paper).

This feedback highlights local government's role, and the challenges and opportunities councils have identified in improving access and inclusion for people with disability who are not eligible for NDIS supports.

LGA recommendations

1. The LGA supports the scope and intended outcomes described on [page 7](#) of the Consultation Paper, but there needs to be clear achievable measures that service providers will be able to practically assess and report on. It is suggested that any measures and outcomes framework needs to be developed in close consultation with local government, via ALGA.
2. The LGA recommends that the Commonwealth Government strengthens collaboration and funding with state/territory governments to ensure co-ordinated effort in implementing their shared access and inclusion agenda, including by considering opportunities presented through initiatives like the former Home and Community Care (HACC) program.
3. That the Commonwealth and/or state/territories provide long-term funding (block funding) for local government to deliver programs and services that support information, and capacity building initiatives in local communities. This would serve to avoid market gaps in the availability of these types of general supports, particularly in regional and remote areas.
4. That there is an investment in resources, most appropriately developed at a state/territory or Commonwealth level, to support local government to meet community expectations and better communicate needs. For example, a whole of government Universal Design Policy and the resources under it, developed in collaboration with local government. See the [Whole of Victorian Government Universal Design Policy](#) as a good example.
5. The LGA recommends that local councils are supported to employ skilled people with disability who draw on local knowledge and networks and provide leadership in local communities.
6. The LGA recommends that funding agreements between both
 - a. the Federal and state/territory governments and councils and
 - b. the Federal and state/territory governments and disability-led organisationsencourage partnerships and collaborations with each other to provide an authorising environment to enable strong, ongoing partnerships that foster collaborative action at the local level.

7. The LGA recommends that the Federal and state/territory governments fund of a program model, like the Victorian Building Inclusive Communities program, and replicate it across all jurisdictions to:
 - a. ensure consistency in community capacity building and
 - b. support local government's ability to build the capability of community organisations through community development approaches (e.g. sporting clubs, arts groups), at the whole-of-community level to deliver disability-inclusive and accessible services that complement and leverage other government initiatives.
8. That the Commonwealth Government provide fixed-term funding for a minimum of five years, for an Access and Inclusion Policy Officer in every state and territory local government association to support the implementation of [*Australia's Disability Strategy 2021-2031*](#). State and territory governments could supplement funding to meet specific jurisdictional objectives and priorities.
9. The LGA recommends that there is improved accurate local data sets for councils and that a framework for data collection be established, across all jurisdictions, to enable local insights to inform an understanding of emerging needs within communities.
10. It is suggested that the local government sector be included in these conversations, given that the Australian Local Government Association (ALGA) are also a signatory to [*Australia's Disability Strategy 2021-2031*](#) and has committed to progress the necessary reform to achieve the Strategy's vision and goals.

Background – foundational supports

The review of the NDIS found that there was a need for improved inclusion and accessibility of mainstream services, improvements to the way the NDIS works and for additional supports - known as foundational supports - to be delivered in two areas referred to as 'general' supports and 'targeted' supports.

General supports - 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.¹

Targeted supports - 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 focus 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.²

The focus of this submission is on 'general' supports and their relationship to local government.

It is noted that feedback from this consultation process will inform the review of the Information, Linkages and Capacity Building (ILC) program and other information, advice and capacity building supports funded programs.

What does information, advice and capacity building support mean?

The Consultation Paper describes *information, advice and capacity building supports* as:

- 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.

¹ *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.*

²*Ibid.*

Local government's role in disability access and inclusion

Local government, as the level of government closest to the community, has a significant role in program and policy development, service and infrastructure delivery, and ensuring inclusion and access for people with disability.

The initiatives and activities which local governments undertake to support people with disability vary in scale and location but broadly include:³

- Providing services directly to people with disability, their families and carers
 - Local governments play a critical role in providing services and often work in partnership with other organisations to deliver these services.
- Enabling or facilitating services and access to services and facilities
 - Local governments enable and facilitate services or access to services and facilities in a range of ways including through the provision of financial assistance and referrals to appropriate services.
- Advocating for services or support
 - Local governments play a key role as advocates, including raising awareness across communities and lobbying other levels of government or non-government organisations to establish specific policies, programs or grants.
- Employing people with disability
 - Local governments can be a key source of employment for local communities, particularly in regional, rural and remote Australia
- Providing accessible services and infrastructure
 - Local government integrates and embeds inclusiveness and accessibility into planning and development to ensure essential services, footpaths and facilities are accessible and can be used by people with disability

Additionally in South Australia (SA), local councils have legislative responsibilities under the [*Disability Inclusion Act 2018 \(SA\)*](#) to prepare disability access and inclusion plans, in

³ Hunting, S.A., Goodall, A., Pavkovic, I., Lawrie, A., & Ryan, R. 2017. [How local governments can increase the social and economic participation of people with disability: A place-based framework for success](#). University of Technology Sydney Institute for Public Policy and Governance, Sydney, NSW.

consultation with people with a disability, and that include strategies to support people with disability in the following areas:

- access to built environs, events and facilities
- access to information and communications
- addressing the specific needs of people with disability in its programs and services
- employment.

The [Local Government Act 1999 \(SA\)](#) also requires local councils to *“provide for the welfare, well-being and interests of individuals and groups within its community.”*

Feedback

1. Questions about scope and intended outcomes

- Is the broad focus and scope of information, advice and capacity building supports aligned to what you would expect? Are there any gaps?
- Are the intended outcomes the right ones? Are there any gaps? How would you measure them or like to see progress and improvements measured?

LGA recommendation

1. The LGA supports the scope and intended outcomes described on [page 7](#) of the Consultation Paper, but there needs to be clear achievable measures that service providers will be able to practically assess and report on. It is suggested that any measures and outcomes framework needs to be developed in close consultation with local government, via the Australian Local Government association (ALGA).

2. General feedback addressing both information, advice and referral for service providers and capacity building supports

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

- What could help support innovation, quality and best practice in the delivery of these supports?

The LGA is a strong advocate for policies that achieve better outcomes for councils and the communities they represent. Councils are a partner in government and part of the solution.

However, despite the many changes, there is still much needed to ensure that society is fully inclusive of people with disability. It is still inconsistent across jurisdictions and within local communities.

The roles that local government can play in the provision of information, advice and referrals as well as capacity building is substantial, and outlined below.

2.1. NDIS Review

At its October meeting, the (SA) Local Government Access and Inclusion Network (LGAIN)⁴ members discussed the NDIS Review, changes to the NDIS legislation and the Rules that will support the legislative changes that commenced on 3 October 2024.

Our members observed that the NDIS Review mirrored what they had observed in many of their local communities, relevant to this consultation, which was:

- That there is a lack of accessible and affordable foundational supports outside of the NDIS for under 65's.
- The scale and pace of change in community inclusion and accessibility needed to increase.
- The connection between mainstream services and the NDIS needed to be improved.
- A recognition of local government's essential role in building inclusive communities and providing accessible services.⁵

They remarked that the review further noted:

Home and community care (HACC) programs that support people under 65 years of age with less intensive disability needs, including for people with chronic health conditions, are inconsistent and underfunded in most states and territories. The NDIS and HACC or equivalent programs are poorly connected, and there are insufficient HACC-style supports outside the NDIS, including for people who lost access to these supports during the transition to the NDIS.⁶

⁴ A network of council practitioners responsible for disability access and inclusion plans.

⁵ 2023 *Working together to deliver the NDIS - Independent Review into the National Disability Insurance Scheme: Final Report*, Page 35.

⁶ 2023 *Working together to deliver the NDIS - Independent Review into the National Disability Insurance Scheme: Final Report*, Page 57.

This aligned strongly with what many council staff have experienced and with the broader South Australian experience, where there has been very limited direct SA Government support and funding following the commencement of the NDIS, which was then seen as a 'Federal Government' responsibility and not a responsibility of the State.

Case study: State HACC

In April 2021, the South Australian Government ceased the 35-year-old, State Home and Community Care (HACC) program, designed to provide flexible, low-level support services to people under 65 years with moderate functional disabilities.

Many councils were recipients of HACC funding and through this program council Community Services' staff were seen as a trusted source of information and for many vulnerable people, a 'bridge' to participation in community life. Centre-based programs, which focussed on social connection, complemented the State funded HACC services through reconnecting, re-abling and fostering community connections, networks and friendships between local people.

These programs further support the safeguarding of people with disability due to the increased opportunities for social connections and participation in the community.

LGA recommendation

2. The LGA recommends that the Commonwealth Government strengthens collaboration and funding with state/territory governments to ensure co-ordinated effort in implementing their shared access and inclusion agenda, including by considering opportunities presented through initiatives like the former HACC program.

2.2. Funding and market gaps

As the level of government closest to communities, local government is ideally placed to lead and develop capacity for social and civic inclusion for people with disabilities.

Councils are a level of government with experience and knowledge but often not the financial resources and funding streams to support an ongoing focus on people living with disability.

Councils often lack sufficient discretionary funding to establish new facilities, activities, projects and programs that support increased social and economic participation of people with disability. As a result, they must constantly proactively source funds from grants either on their own or in partnership with others.

Therefore, to avoid market gaps or councils being seen as the “provider of last resort” in the availability of these types of general supports, including in lower population and regional and remote areas, there is an opportunity for the Commonwealth and/or state/territory governments to develop funding and partnership arrangements to meet the shared objectives of the program, particularly in rural and regional areas.

The NDIS client choice model - rather than block funding – makes it extremely difficult for councils to operate in thin market environments as participation fees may not cover costs. With many [councils struggling with financial sustainability](#) this is problematic and makes the argument for funding even more necessary.

LGA recommendation

3. That the Federal and/or state/territory governments provide long-term funding (block funding) for local government to deliver programs and services that support information, and capacity building initiatives in local communities. This would serve to avoid market gaps in the availability of these types of general supports, particularly in regional and remote areas.

2.3. Community capacity building challenges and opportunities

The LGA supports the types of offerings described on [pages 8, 9, 12 and 13](#) of the Consultation Paper and suggests that the role of local government is considered in this space, whilst recognising the following challenges and opportunities.

It is noted in the Consultation Paper that there is a commitment by governments to establish additional supports to those delivered through the NDIS and mainstream services, and these will build on a reformed ILC program with additional or enhanced programs and initiatives that offer information, advice and referral-type supports.

It is reported that these new offerings are intended to be well-connected and coordinated and include trusted information and advice at a state/territory and local level, in addition to national information.

Local governments provide their communities with a wide range of information, resources and reporting about services and operations in their local community, and not all is provided in a way which is accessible to people with disability. Whilst this is improving, with many councils offering disability awareness training to staff and volunteers and advocating on behalf of people with disability through actions in DAIPs, there is still much to be done.

Current challenges

Ability of councils

To actively support the provision of programs that build capacity, many, particularly smaller and less resourced, councils would need to fund and resource services with ratepayers funds – and they may not be confident that their participation will be a success as it is difficult to know the full extent of the local demand. It is unclear if rate revenue will be sufficient to cover the costs.

There is also the consideration as to whether council infrastructure and the built environment (e.g. buildings, swimming pools, playgrounds, beaches) encourage or support the mainstream participation of people with disability or are accessible to people with disability.⁷

Pressures to meet State Government targets

Another concern for South Australian councils is that the State Government has stated that disability access and inclusion plans developed by councils and other ‘State Authorities’ will be the operational drivers and provide the activities/initiatives that will respond to the State Disability Access and Inclusion Plan and achieve the overarching State Plan targets. There is also no advice or suggestion of how local governments will be supported to achieve this in the most collaborative and streamlined manner with investment and resources.

This places additional pressures on local councils who, due to their size and resources, may not be able to meet these targets. It is unacceptable that lower levels of government be mandated to achieve outcomes which require resources beyond their means.

Resource and capacity development

Local Government can only meet community expectations if supported by state/territory and Federal investment in resources most appropriately developed and co-designed at State or Commonwealth level. This would assist to uplift sector capacity and focus on driving equitable access to quality and inclusive community services.

For example, developing guidelines for universal design should be developed by the Federal government in partnership with state/territories governments and in collaboration with local governments to ensure that they are locally relevant.

⁷ <https://nylga.sa.gov.au/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/KPPM-Legatus-NDIS-Report-FINAL-20-5-18-002.pdf>

Another example is around quality disability inclusion training. In SA, up until recently, councils had few options other than flying in trainers from the eastern states to deliver training to staff. It was only due to an [Information, Linkages and Capacity Building program](#) (ILC) Grant in 2021 that councils had access to a council-specific co-designed training package. However, like many grants, when this money dries up, so may the training opportunities.

Short-term funding cycles

The short-term nature of funding is also problematic when it comes to disability inclusion activities. The ILC is an example where funding is sought for a particular project to be delivered in a specific timeframe. Whilst there have been some great outcomes, as noted below, this approach does not provide for ongoing capacity-building initiatives within councils or the community.

Case study: Information, Linkages and Capacity Building

LGA South Australia

In 2020, the LGA was the recipient of ILC grants, which led to many successful outcomes for councils. The [Local Government Information, Linkages and Capacity Building Project](#) (LGILC) was delivered with funding provided by the National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA) and in partnership with the Department of Human Services (SA).

The main purpose of LGILC program was to enable South Australian councils to undertake activities and industry development that addressed thin market coverage, including mainstream delivery by increasing the understanding of the needs of people living with disability in rural, regional and remote South Australia.

The independent project evaluation noted it was a success and that each of the three project streams achieved their objectives, however the longevity of the programs has been limited once the funding ceased, with many of the activities no longer occurring.

City of Playford (with City of Salisbury)

In 2017, [the Right Track project](#), a collaboration between the City of Playford and the City of Salisbury, was funded by the NDIS ILC program to improve access to the NDIS for Aboriginal, Torres Strait Islander, and culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) communities. The project was driven by extensive engagement with these communities, whose lived experiences identified key barriers, including complex NDIS

language, cultural stigma around disability, and limited understanding of available supports.

This input informed the creation of two tailored toolkits: one for CALD communities and one for Aboriginal people. These resources simplify NDIS processes into actionable steps, featuring culturally positive and accessible content shaped by direct feedback and artistic contributions from the community. Additionally, webinars were developed in collaboration with local groups, focusing on navigating the NDIS and building confidence in understanding disability.

The project outcomes demonstrate increased accessibility, reduced stigma, and strengthened local capacity to support people with disabilities through training for interpreters, bicultural workers, and community leaders.

Simplifying complex systems and combining resources with interactive education ensures sustained engagement and inclusion for traditionally underserved groups. The Right Track serves as a model for fostering equity and accessibility through authentic, community-informed strategies. Further information available -

<https://www.playford.sa.gov.au/community/people/disability-and-accessibility/the-right-track>

Recommendations from the project are that foundational supports should emphasise the importance of community-led, culturally tailored approaches that address systemic barriers and build trust.

Opportunities

Citizenship approach

In SA, and likewise across the local government sector, councils apply a citizenship based approach to service delivery, rather than a client approach primarily adopted by the private sector.

Councils, whilst varying in their approach and breadth of services, provide programs designed for people with disability and those vulnerable in the community, using a community development and strengths-based approach that empowers residents to make choices that suit them best.

This type of approach seeks to build the community's connection with the area they live, their capacity and wellbeing through inclusive programs that increase community participation, social connectedness, skills development, improving capabilities and contributions to live independent and meaningful lives in their community.

The delivery of General Supports could be improved by engaging with local government and understanding the role councils play in supporting the health and wellbeing of all members of their community, using a [social model of disability](#).

Upskilling council community development

Local government requires funding to develop inclusive skills and culture building on its strengths-based community development capability by employing skilled people with disability who draw on local knowledge and networks. Employing well-supported skilled staff with disability, will build inclusion skills and confidence across the organisation.

Federal and state/territory co-funding agreements with councils should encourage partnerships with disability-led agencies and focus on council community-based programs to:

- strengthen inclusive community attitudes
- support people with disability and their families and carers to develop sustainable community connections
- educate Council staff and volunteers about inclusive strategies

Councils can deliver more and better access and inclusion outcomes if there is a growing body of skilled residents, agencies and Council staff with disability leadership experience.

Council partnerships

Councils are strong advocates and have a direct connection and partnerships with many different community organisations. Council operated community centres, recreation centres and libraries offer a breadth of programs ranging from cultural activities, programs that support physical activity and those that improve health and wellbeing; whilst council managed sports grounds and swimming pools provide access to local clubs and associations.

However, it is suggested that funding the development of more disability-led organisations contributing to access and inclusion would support local governments with their efforts. Leadership should be provided by Commonwealth and state/territory governments to build capacity of disability-led organisations to develop resources and programs which can be drawn on by all levels of Government such as [Sport For All](#).

Use of volunteers

Another significant point of difference for councils is the extensive engagement of volunteers who contribute significantly to the delivery of a range services across the service spectrum and stretch Federal Government funding further.

Investing in local social inclusion initiatives would help to support the Government's agenda to reduce discrimination and improve community attitudes through community awareness and understanding of disability.

Updating and funding a program model across all Australian communities reflective of the Victorian Building Inclusive Communities Program (refer below) would be one way to achieve a nationally consistent approach to inclusion and capacity building. Currently social inclusion of people with disability continues to be ad hoc, with little tools to accurately assess it.

Case study - Victorian Government Building Inclusive Communities (BIC) Program

The Victorian Government Building Inclusive Communities (BIC) Program funded the appointment of designated disability roles (Metro, Rural and Deaf Access Officers) in Victorian councils for 17 years. The strength of the BIC program was that it was place-based, provided flexibility in program guidelines, and it had effective collaboration between State and local government as well as between councils.⁸

Unfortunately, the BIC program wound up following the rollout of the NDIS in Victoria. The Victorian [*Parliamentary Inquiry report into Social Inclusion of People with Disabilities*](#) provided great insights into the role of local government and the differences between the BIC program and the intended LAC model (particularly Chapter 2).⁹ It is suggested that this information is considered.

LGA recommendations

4. That there is an investment in resources, most appropriately developed at a state/territory or Commonwealth level, to support local government to meet community expectations and better communicate needs. For example, a whole of government Universal Design Policy and the resources under it, developed in collaboration with local government. See the [Whole of Victorian Government Universal Design Policy](#) as a good example.
5. The LGA recommends that local councils are supported to employ skilled people with disability who draw on local knowledge and networks and provide leadership in local communities.
6. The LGA recommend that funding agreements between both:

⁸ Inquiry into social inclusion and Victorians with disability - Submission S131, MetroAccess South Division: Bayside Peninsula & Southern Melbourne.

⁹ Municipal Association of Victoria's [Submission to the NDIs Review, August 2023](#)

- a. the Federal and state/territory governments and councils and
 - b. the Federal and state/territory governments and disability-led organisations encourage partnerships and collaborations with each other to provide an authorising environment to enable strong, ongoing partnerships that foster collaborative action at the local level.
7. The LGA recommends that the Federal and state/territory governments fund of a program model, like the Victorian Building Inclusive Communities program and replicate it across all jurisdictions to:
- a. ensure consistency in community capacity building and
 - b. support local government's ability to build the capability of community organisations through community development approaches (e.g. sporting clubs, arts groups), at the whole-of-community level to deliver disability-inclusive and accessible services that complement and leverage other government initiatives.

2.4. Local government sector leadership to support innovation, quality and best practice

Most state and territory local government associations have worked cooperatively with their respective governments to support state-wide initiatives for people with disability. Councils are well placed to build capacity for social and civic inclusion and support awareness raising for people with disabilities at the local level.

Unlike interstate counterparts, the peak body for local government in SA has not had State Government funding for a dedicated position to support disability inclusion.

In 2020, the [Local Government Research and Development Scheme](#) funded a Senior Policy Officer to support councils with new legislative requirements to develop Disability Access and Inclusion Plans (DAIPs) under the [Disability Inclusion Act 2018 \(SA\)](#). However, once the funding ceased in 2022 work in this area has declined.

The LGA hosts a Teams site for the Local Government Access and Inclusion Network, and provided meeting space for network meetings, but it is limited in the extent of support and advice it can provide to practitioners working in councils.

It is noted that the [2024 Review of Australia's Disability Strategy 2021-2031](#) found that more needs to be done to support a coordinated approach across governments as well as a need to “re-invigorate” the role of local government.¹⁰

The LGA would be keen to work with the Commonwealth and the State Government to explore additional grant opportunities and funding from the State and Federal Governments to build sector capacity and support the implementation of *Australia's Disability Strategy 2021 – 31*, to deliver access and inclusion initiatives in local communities.

LGA recommendation

8. That the Commonwealth Government provide fixed-term funding for a minimum of five years, for an Access and Inclusion Policy Officer in every state and territory local government association to support the implementation of [Australia's Disability Strategy 2021-2031](#). State and territory governments could supplement funding to meet specific jurisdictional objectives and priorities.

2.5. Data to support innovation, quality and best practice

Data collection at the local level is often missing in data sets or is limited. The [2024 Review of Australia's Disability Strategy 2021-2031](#) identified that ‘improving data and reporting’ was one of the top 5 topics raised during public engagement.

There is no robust data collection of what is happening at community levels and the power and impact of the initiatives at the council level. Aligning outcomes and collective impact across the levels of government is currently missing and, therefore, more challenging to attract resourcing to enhance or scale initiatives.¹¹

Data is also crucial to support new and emerging practice and encourage evidence-informed innovation in delivering safe and inclusive programs and services to people with disability.

LGA recommendation

9. The LGA recommends that there is improved accurate local data sets for councils and that a framework for data collection be established, across all jurisdictions, to enable local insights to inform an understanding of emerging needs within communities.

¹⁰ <https://www.disabilitygateway.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/2024-12/5486-australias-disability.pdf>

¹¹ MAV submission to the Review of the NDIS, August 2023

https://www.mav.asn.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0012/33204/Submission-to-the-NDIS-Review-Aug-2023.pdf

2.6. Implementation and timeframes

The Consultation Paper noted that the Federal Government will “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.”

It is essential that program design harmonisation between the Federal Government and state/territory governments occurs to achieve a joined-up system of support for people living with disability.

LGA recommendation

10. It is suggested that the local government sector be included in conversations as to how additional supports will be implemented, given that the Australian Local Government Association (ALGA) are also a signatory to [Australia's Disability Strategy 2021-2031](#) and has committed to progress the necessary reform to achieve the Strategy's vision and goals.

Conclusion

The LGA welcomes the opportunity to provide feedback to the Australian Government on this important consultation. Councils deliver cost effective services, contribute significant in-kind funding, stretching Federal funding even further. As a level of government, we are committed to promoting the wellbeing of our citizens - of all ages and abilities.

Local councils have strong networks and play a key role in advocacy and leadership for local population outcomes. With the right resources, councils can be an effective partner in delivering general supports across communities to the benefit of all people with disability, their families and carers.

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