Australian Government
Department of Social Services

Changing the Disability Services Act

We want to know what you think

An Easy Read paper

How to use this paper

The Australian Government Department of Social Services (DSS) wrote this paper.

When you see the word ‘we’, it means DSS.

We wrote this paper in an easy to read way.

We use pictures to explain some ideas.

Bold

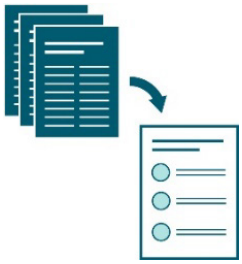
Not bold

We have written some words in **bold**.

This means the letters are thicker and darker.

We explain what these words mean.

There is a list of these words on page 38.



This Easy Read paper is a summary of another paper. This means it only includes the most important ideas.

You can find more information on our website.

www.engage.dss.gov.au/a-new-act-to-replace-the-disability-services-act-1986

You can ask for help to read this paper.
A friend, family member or support person may be able to help you.

What's in this paper?

What is this paper about?	4
Why do we want to change the Act?	6
How to tell us what you think	10
Important ideas in the Act	15
Who the new Act will support	19
Making sure people with disability are safe	27
Services we want to include in the new Act	30
Contact us	37
Word list	38

What is this paper about?

The *Disability Services Act 1986* is a law.

It explains what services the Government can provide for people with disability.

In this paper we call it the Act.

We want to make a new law to replace the Act.

In this paper we call it the new Act.

We want to hear what you think we should include in the new Act.

The new Act will also include:

- who the services are for

- how the services should work.

We also need your help to make sure we use the right words.

Why do we want to change the Act?

The Act hasn't changed much in over 30 years.

But the way the Government supports people with disability has changed.

In 2008 we signed the *United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities*.

Some people call it the CRPD.

In this paper we call it the **UN Convention**.

The UN Convention is an agreement between different countries.

The UN Convention explains how people with disability should be treated fairly and equally.

We also made **Australia's Disability Strategy** 2021–2031 (the Strategy).

The Strategy is a plan to support people with disability in all areas of their life.

We want to make sure the new Act works well with:

- the Strategy

- the UN Convention.

The new Act should include disability services that the community uses now.

It should also work well with new ideas in the future about how to support people with disability.

In this paper we explain what:

- we could include in the new Act

- questions we have for you.

We also explain how to tell us what you think.

Together we can make sure the new Act
does a good job at supporting people with disability
to achieve their goals.

How to tell us what you think

We want to hear everyone's ideas about how the new Act should work.

We want to find out what ideas you have.

This includes what you think needs to change.

Your ideas will help us understand:

- your experiences

- what services you need.

This will help us work out what parts of the Act need to change.

And how we should change the Act.

We want to hear from:

- people with disability

- families and carers.

We also want to hear from disability organisations.

And we want to hear from:

- **advocates** – who speak up for people with disability

- **providers** – who deliver services to people with disability.

In this paper we explain our ideas.

And we ask you some questions.

You can choose to answer:

- all of the questions

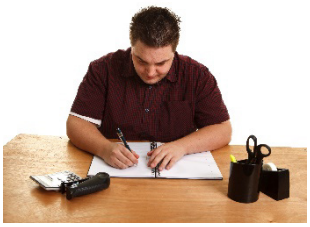
- some of the questions

Or you can just tell us what you think.

You can share what you think in different ways.

You can visit our website.

www.engage.dss.gov.au/a-new-act-to-replace-the-disability-services-act-1986



You can fill out this paper and send it to us.

There is a box below each question where you can write your answer.

You can also send your ideas in an email.

sector.engagement@dss.gov.au

You might:

- write what you think

- make an audio recording

- record a video.

Please tell us what you think by 20 December 2022.

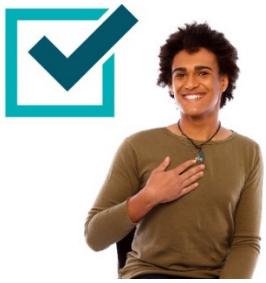
Important ideas in the Act

We have 5 ideas we want to include in the new Act.

1. The new Act should work with other laws to follow the UN Convention.

2. The new Act should support people with disability to:

- take part in the community
- work and earn money
- be **independent.**



When you are independent, you can do things for yourself.

This includes making your own decisions.

3

3. The new Act should provide services that help people work and earn money.

4

4. The new Act should make sure providers work with people with disability to plan their services.

This includes making sure the services:

- work well
- are good quality.

5

5. The new Act should help the community:

- know about disability

- understand disability

- accept people with disability.

Questions for you to think about

What do you think about the important ideas we want to include in the new Act?

What other ideas should we include?

Who the new Act will support

It's important for the new Act to be clear about who should receive disability services.

The new Act could focus on people with disability who experience **barriers** in the community.

A barrier is something that stops you from doing something you:

- need to do
- want to do.

We want the new Act to support people with disability when barriers stop them from taking part in the community.

This includes barriers that come from people's **attitudes** towards disability.

Attitudes are what people think, feel and believe.

This also includes physical barriers that come from places and spaces.

For example, stairs or bright lights.

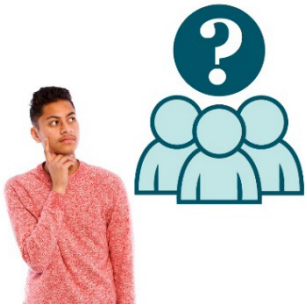
We also want the new Act to focus on barriers that come from:

- rules

- the way organisations work.

And barriers that affect the way people communicate.

Questions for you to think about



What do you think about the way the new Act will explain who can receive disability services?

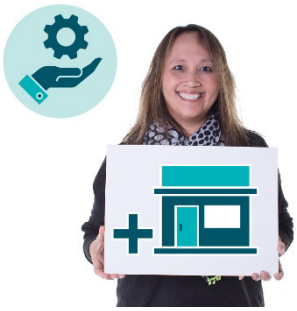
How do you think we should explain who can receive these services?

What should happen when services do the same work

The new Act also needs to explain what happens when someone can get services from:

- the Australian Government

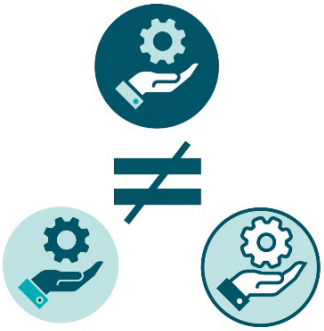
and



- another place.

For example:

- the NDIS
- state and territory governments.



The new Act could explain that the services in the Act shouldn't:

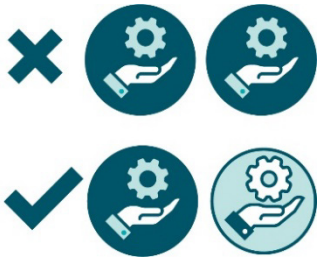
- be the same as another type of service
- do the same thing as another type of service.

The new Act could also explain what happens when a person with disability can get services from 2 places.

Governments and providers should work together with the person with disability.

They should make sure they:

- get the services they need



- don’t get the same service twice.

And they should make sure they can work towards their goals.

Questions for you to think about

What do you think about our ideas to make sure services:

- aren't the same?
- don't do the same thing?

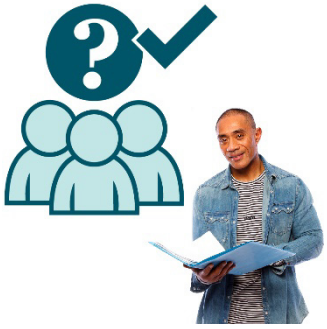
What other ideas should we include?

Explaining disability

The new Act could explain what a disability is.

But we are not sure if it should.

We know that the way we talk about disability can change over time.



But it’s important for the new Act to be clear about who can receive disability services.

Questions for you to think about

Do you think the new Act should explain what a disability is?

Do you have any other ideas you want to share?

Making sure people with disability are safe

It's important to make sure people with disability are safe when they receive disability services.

At the moment the Act includes the National **Standards** for Disability Services.

Standards are rules about how to do things well.

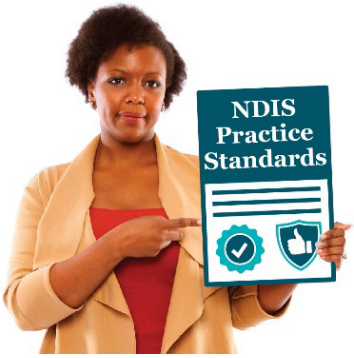
You can:

- meet standards

- go above standards.

These Standards are similar to the:

- Aged Care Quality Standards

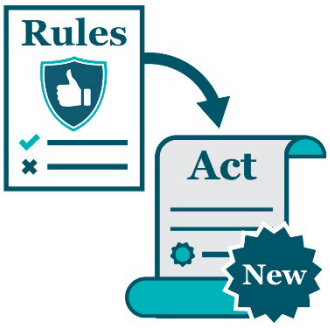


- NDIS Practice Standards.

All of these Standards work to keep people safe.

But it can create extra work for organisations that have to follow more than one set of Standards.

Questions for you to think about

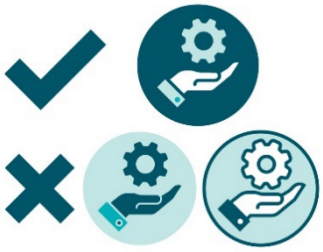


How should the new Act include rules about how to keep people with disability safe?

Services we want to include in the new Act

The Government can only agree to spend money when a law says we can.

The Act included all the disability services in the community when it started.



But now not all disability services are covered by the Act.

This means we need to use other laws to spend money on these services.

We want to make sure we include all disability services in the new Act.

We want to include 9 services:

1

Accessibility services

These services help make our community **accessible**.

When the community is accessible, it is easy to:

- find and use services

- understand and use information

- move around.

2

Accommodation support services

These services help people with disability find a place to live.

3

Advocacy services

These services support people with disability to have their say.

They can also give them information and advice.

4

Employment and training services

These services help people with disability find and keep a job.

5

Independent living services

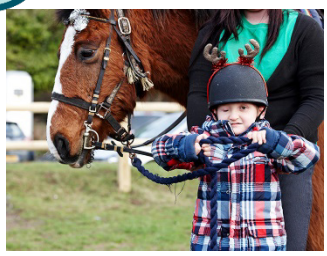
These services help people with disability be independent in their own home.

6

Information and education services

These services help people with disability study and learn.

7



Recreation services

These services help people with disability do things for fun, like hobbies or sports.

8

Respite care services

These services help:

- people with disability
- the people who care for them.

When someone takes a break from caring for someone with disability, it is called **respite**.

9

Research and collecting data

When we research and collect **data**, it helps make sure:

- services work well
- we have good information about people with disability.

Data includes facts, information and records.

Questions for you to think about

Do you agree with our list of disability services?

What other disability services should we include in the new Act?

Employment and rehabilitation services

Disability **Employment** Services (DES) is a program that helps people with disability:

- get ready to work
- find a job
- keep a job.

Employment means you:

- have a job
- go to work
- get paid.

DES also helps people return to work:

- after an injury
- if a disability affected how they work.

We call this employment **rehabilitation**.

There are a lot of rules about these services, including how:

- governments pay for them
- organisations manage them.

For example, the Government must pay for DES with a **grant**.

A grant is money from the government for important work that helps others.

But this rule doesn't apply to employment rehabilitation services.

Questions for you to think about

Should we keep these 2 services separate?

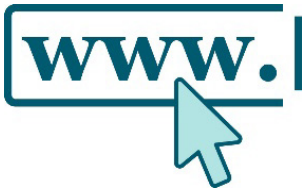
Or should we combine them into one service?

Contact us

If you have any questions about changing the Act, you can contact us.

You can email us.

sector.engagement@dss.gov.au



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Word list

This list explains what the **bold** words mean.

Accessible

When the community is accessible, it is easy to:

- find and use services
- understand and use information
- move around.

Advocate

Advocates speak up for people with disability.

Attitudes

Attitudes are what people think, feel and believe.

Australia's Disability Strategy (the Strategy)

The Strategy is a plan to support people with disability in all areas of their life.

Barrier

A barrier is something that stops you from doing something you:

- need to do
- want to do.

Data

Data includes facts, information and records.

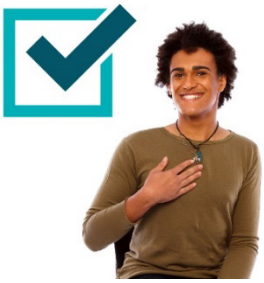
Employment

Employment means you:

- have a job
- go to work
- get paid.

Grant

A grant is money from the government for important work that helps others.



Independent

When you are independent, you can do things for yourself.

This includes making your own decisions.

Provider

Providers deliver services to people with disability.

Rehabilitation

Employment rehabilitation helps people return to work:

- after an injury
- if a disability affected how they work.

Respite

When someone takes a break from caring for someone with disability, it is called respite.

Standards

Standards are rules about how to do things well.

You can:

- meet standards
- go above standards.

UN Convention

The UN Convention is an agreement between different countries.

It explains how people with disability should be treated fairly and equally.

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