

Federal election 2025

# Enabling children with disability to thrive

## About the Child and Family Disability Alliance

The Child and Family Disability Alliance (CAFDA) is a national partnership of not-for profit family-led organisations ACD, Kiind and Belongsid Families (formerly known as Kindred).

Together, we support more than 30,000 families and carers raising children with all kinds of disability and developmental delay across Australia.

Established by families for families, our boards, management and front-line staff bring lived experience and understand the joys and the challenges of parenting a child with disability.

Our shared vision is to empower parents and caregivers with the knowledge, skills and connections they need so their families and children can thrive.

We work by building the capacity and wellbeing of parents and carers through our well established and proven model providing information, skills building and peer support.

## 1. Provide a support guarantee for children

Currently, children with disability or developmental delay are reliant on the NDIS to receive Early Childhood Intervention (ECI) supports. As reforms flowing from the NDIS Review are implemented, careful design and rigorous transition planning is critical to ensure that children do not fall between program and transition cracks. Effective and equitable access to supports is essential. The following support guarantees will help build trust and confidence among families at this time of significant upheaval.

### **No rollback of NDIS access until alternate supports are in place**

The NDIS Review emphasised that no changes impacting children's access to ECI should be introduced until foundational supports for children and their families are piloted, implemented and ramped up. This absolutely needs to be adhered to.

### **Demand based funding for ECI supports outside of the NDIS**

Every child who meets the threshold for targeted foundational supports outside of the NDIS needs to be guaranteed rapid access to these supports. If capped funding means support places get exhausted and some children are left without support, trust and confidence will be rapidly undermined.

### **Strong equity considerations in the design of foundational supports:**

- Strong cultural safety for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and their families
- Enhanced provision for families experiencing multiple complexities
- Enhanced provision for children not engaged in early learning
- No child excluded because of their visa status

### **Supporting and involving parents and carers in systems transformation:**

Parents and carers of children with disability are at the frontline of systems changes and ought to be equipped as key partners in transitioning to a connected system of supports. Through family-led organisation, families and carers need to be kept closely updated on what is changing and supported to navigate these changes. Importantly, they need to be meaningfully involved in informing the changes and providing real time advice on implementation experiences.

## 2. House family-led organisations providing information, advice and connection services in all children’s hospitals

When a child begins to develop differently, it can be an all-encompassing experience for that family. Parents and carers rapidly need good advice, support and connections to minimise the time spent in distress and isolation.

Access to rapid, trusted and strengths-based peer-support – from other parents that have travelled a similar journey – is critical to helping families build hope and be equipped and empowered to navigate complex systems for their child and themselves.

Enhancing the role and visibility of family-led, child focussed organisations as a landing place for families at the beginning of their journey ought to be prioritised when ramping up peer and capacity building supports.

Children’s hospitals are frequented by parents and carers of children with disability and developmental delay, including families travelling from regional and remote areas. Embedding family-led organisations in every children’s hospital would be a simple, but highly effective way of meeting families where they are at. Co-location within the hospital ensures seamless integration with health and disability support services, creating clear pathways for families when they need support the most.

### **Kiind at the Perth Children’s Hospital**

Kiind has been providing family-led connection and support at Perth Children’s Hospital for over 35 years.

Kiind’s on-site peer worker team provide a warm and ready connection for families – including those going through assessment and diagnostic processes and families from regional and remote areas travelling to Perth for treatment.

Being on site at the hospital means families are rapidly connected with peer supports. It has also strengthened the interconnect between peer support and the broader health and disability services system.

## 3. Drive inclusion in early childhood education and care

Being welcome and included in early learning settings – at the very start of the education journey – has profound and ongoing benefits across the life of a child with disability or developmental delay.

Recent landmark inquiries and reviews have all found Australia’s Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) system is failing children with disability and developmental delay. The Productivity Commission ([2024 Report on the Future of Australia’s ECEC system](#)) and the ACCC ([Childcare Inquiry 2023](#)) called for urgent measures to boost inclusion in early learning.

### **Immediately improve the Inclusion Support Program**

The ACCC and Productivity Commission highlighted major shortcomings with the Inclusion Support Program and called for immediate action to:

- troubleshoot barriers to program access
- address delays in program applications
- change and increase subsidies to better reflect costs of inclusion support
- remove barriers to allow the employment of a broader range of additional educators.

*The needs of children with disability are not being met, nor are they adequately supported by existing mechanisms.*

*Some parents and guardians feel unwelcome when making inquiries at a childcare service and disclosing their child’s disability. Some are told their children cannot attend as educators do not have the skills or resources to support the child, or that the centre has reached its quota of children with specific needs.*  
ACCC Childcare Inquiry 2023

## For more information



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