

Reduction in DFAT's funding for and performance in disability inclusion

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Australian **Disability+Development** Consortium

This paper summarises the dramatic reductions seen over the past 5 years in each of:

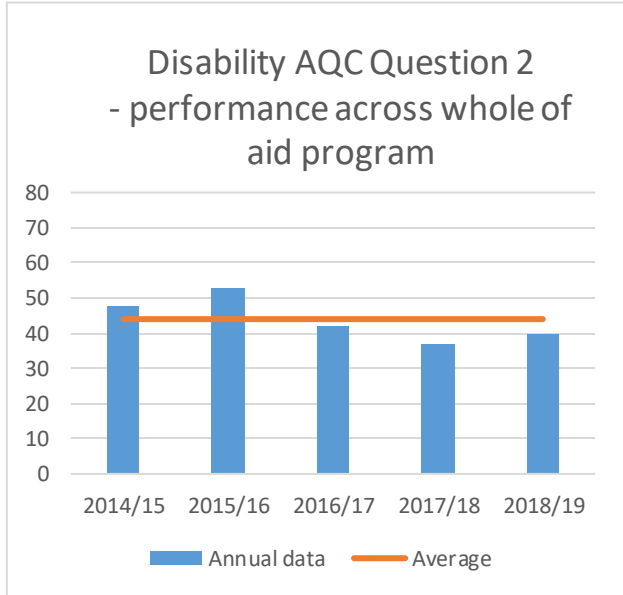
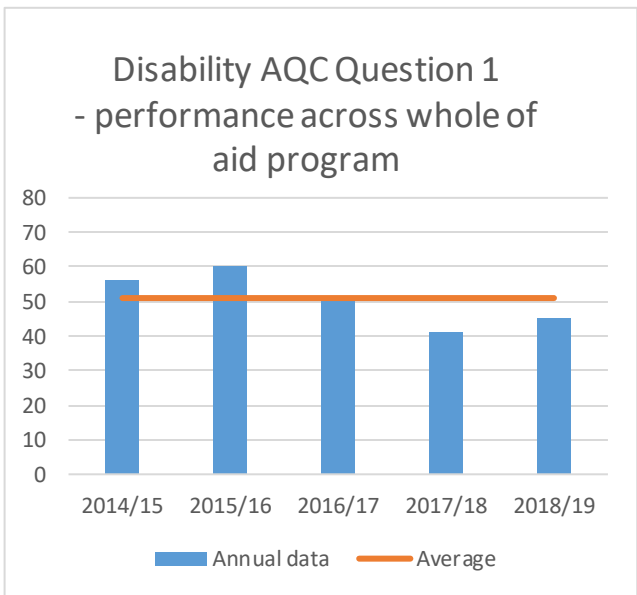
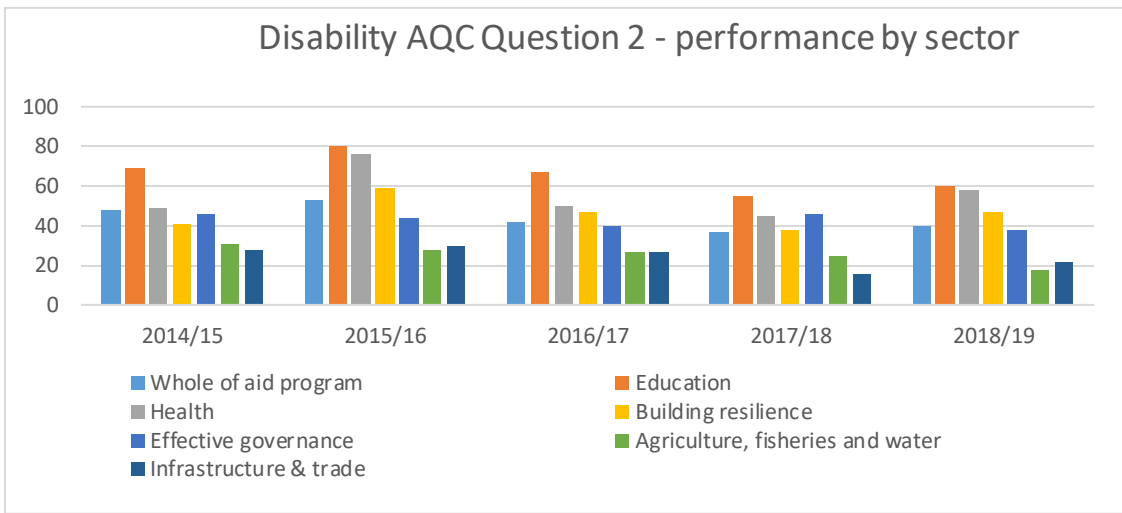
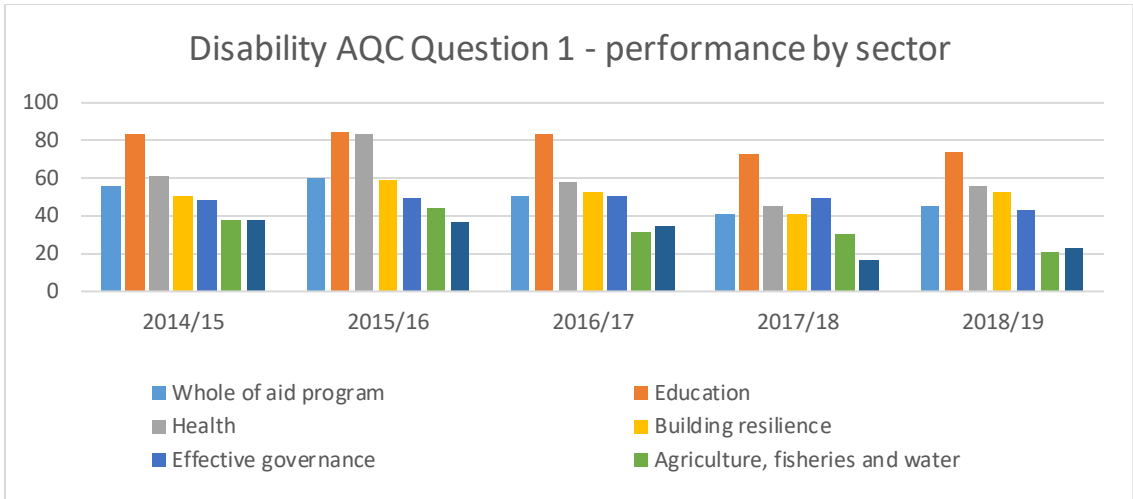
1. The *performance* of disability inclusion within Australia's aid program,
2. The Australian Government's *funding* for DFAT's central disability inclusion budget, and
3. The Australian Government's *funding* disability-inclusive programming.

1. Reduction in disability-inclusive performance in Australia's international development investments

The disability-inclusive performance of the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade's (DFAT) individual international development investments is assessed through two questions:

- Question 1: the investment identifies and addresses barriers to inclusion and opportunities for participation of people with disabilities.
- Question 2: the investment actively involves Disabled People's Organisations in planning, implementation, and monitoring and evaluation.

The previous 5 years' data on these questions shows the performance around disability inclusion is **very low in some sectors, only moderate even in the strongest sectors, and most pertinently, declining**. While there have been a few increased in the most recent year's results, this report nonetheless acknowledges that the percentage of investments rated satisfactory in 2018-19 for actively involving disabled peoples' organisations (40 per cent) and identifying and addressing barriers to inclusion (45 per cent) were **below the whole of development program's five year averages of 44 and 51 per cent respectively**. This is clearly demonstrated in the following graphs:



2. Reduction in DFAT’s central disability inclusion budget allocation

	2016/2017	2017/18	2018/19	2019/2020	2020/21	2021/22
Disability inclusion central allocation	\$ 12,900,000	\$ 12,900,000	\$ 12,900,000	\$ 12,900,000	\$ 9,600,000	\$ 9,600,000
% of total ODA	0.32%	0.32%	0.29%	0.32%	0.24%	0.22%

As this table reflects, **DFAT’s central disability allocation was significantly cut in the 2020 Federal Budget by 25 per cent and the cut was maintained in the 2021 Federal Budget. The allocation is now a significantly lower proportion of the total ODA budget than any other level for the past 5 years.**

For many years prior to this, DFAT’s disability inclusive development work had been allocated a modest budget, with which it has achieved much. The achievements are captured in reviews of this work,¹ which speak to the importance of dedicated and sufficient resourcing to support disability inclusion throughout Australia’s overseas development work. We note the Office of Development Effectiveness’ caution that **ongoing investment in this area is required to secure Australia’s hard-won wins and strong standing in disability inclusive development.** Indeed, the downward trend in performance against the disability inclusion Aid Quality Checks (discussed above) indicates the need for sustained and ongoing foundational funding to this work.

In these circumstances, we are deeply concerned that the substantial cut that was maintained in the 2021 Federal Budget will have grave effects on DFAT’s capacity to continue its current work, capacity building and partnerships in relation to disability inclusive development. Given the foundational nature of this work, these cuts cannot be seen to be compensated through any funding to disability in COVID Country Response Plans or DFAT’s budget for disability-related programming (discussed further below). **While Australia’s ODA and COVID-19 response and recovery programming must be resourced to be disability-inclusive, funding for this should not come at the expense of DFAT’s core, capacity building disability inclusion work.**

2. Reduction in DFAT’s disability inclusion programming budget

Total DFAT spend programs with 'some level of assistance to disabled persons' *						
2013/2014	2014/2015	2015/2016	2016/2017	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20
\$125.8m	\$127.2m	\$106.4m	\$106.0m	\$110.1m	\$109.2m	\$102.3m

This table shows there has been a significant reduction in budget towards disability inclusion programming over the last five years. While these decreases are proportionate to decreases

¹ <https://www.dfat.gov.au/aid/how-we-measure-performance/ode/strategic-evaluations/Pages/development-for-all-evaluation> and <https://www.dfat.gov.au/sites/default/files/development-for-all-evaluation-review.pdf>

to Australia's total ODA budget, this table nonetheless reflects that that **disability inclusion programming budget has reduced by \$23.5 million** since the Australian government committed to the current *Development for All* strategy.

There are also concerns regarding the extent to which these dollar figures actually reflect money invested into improving the lives of people with disabilities. The data here is drawn from the Disability Inclusion table in DFAT's annual *Australia's Official Development Assistance Statistical Summary report*. Each report notes "Estimates in this table reflect the value of all activities that provide **some** level of assistance to disabled persons. The level of assistance varies across all activities with some activities providing principal or significant focus and other activities **moderate or minor** focus"² (emphasis added). The reports' appendix specifically notes that "Due to the variation in focus, caution should be exercised when interpreting disability inclusion data".³

This is pertinent as when we have raised concerns with cuts to DFAT's central disability inclusion budget, we have often been advised that this central budget allocation represents only 10% of the ODA's overall spend on disability. However, reporting fine print suggests that this figure is not robust, as it reflects an overall spend on programs that have 'some' focus on disability - potentially minor - and DFAT itself cautions reliance on this data.

References:

Aid Quality Check related data:

- *Performance of Australian Aid 2014-15*, <http://dfat.gov.au/about-us/publications/Pages/performance-of-australian-aid-2014-15.aspx> p.76.
- *Performance of Australian Aid 2015-16*, <http://dfat.gov.au/about-us/publications/Pages/performance-of-australian-aid-2015-16.aspx> p. 94.
- 2016-17 figures provided through Foreign Affairs Defence and Trade Budget Estimates 2018 – 2019 Questions on Notice – Written – 83; <https://www.aph.gov.au/api/qon/downloadattachment?attachmentId=87b386b7-8ee2-44d2-a9cc-0151f4dba330>
- *Performance of Australian Aid 2017-18*, <https://www.dfat.gov.au/about-us/publications/Pages/performance-of-australian-aid-2017-18> p. 66.
- *Performance of Australian Aid 2018-19*, <https://www.dfat.gov.au/publications/development/performance-of-australian-aid-2018-19> p. 19.

Central disability inclusion budget allocation data:

- 2016-17 Australian Aid Budget Summary <https://www.dfat.gov.au/sites/default/files/2016-17-australian-aid-budget-summary.pdf> p. 6
- 2017-18 Australian Aid Budget Summary <https://www.dfat.gov.au/sites/default/files/2017-18-australian-aid-budget-summary.pdf> p. 8
- 2018-19 figures provided through Foreign Affairs Defence and Trade Budget Estimates 2018 – 2019 Questions on Notice – Written – 83; <https://www.aph.gov.au/api/qon/downloadattachment?attachmentId=87b386b7-8ee2-44d2-a9cc-0151f4dba330>
- 2019-2020 figures obtained verbally and confirmed in ACFID 2019-20 Federal Budget Analysis https://acfid.asn.au/sites/site.acfid/files/ACFID_Budget_Analysis_2019_FINAL_EDIT_4April.pdf p. 7
- 2020-21 figures obtained during DFAT Federal Budget briefing to aid sector, and confirmed via written correspondence and meetings with the Minister Hawke in late 2020.

DFAT's Disability Inclusion Programming Budget data

- Contained in the Disability Inclusion Table contained in the respective annual *Australia's Official Development Assistance: Statistical Summary*, available for the years cited from <https://www.dfat.gov.au/about-us/publications/Pages/statistical-summaries-australias-international-development-cooperation> and most recently <https://www.dfat.gov.au/sites/default/files/development-assistance-statistical-summary-2019-20.pdf>
- Total ODA data is also taken from this report.

² E.g. See *Australia's Official Development Assistance: Statistical Summary* 2018/19, citation above, p. 26.

³ As above, p. 58.