

Federal Budget 2024-2025 - Submission to Treasury

The vision of the Australian Disability and Development Consortium (ADDC) is that the voices and rights of people with disabilities are elevated, reflected in, and inform all international development policies and programs of Australian agencies. In pursuit of this vision, we welcome the opportunity to provide input drawn from the experience and expertise of our membership for the 2024-25 Federal Budget. This submission provides budgetary analysis and guidance to elevate disability equity and rights as a core area of action of Australia's international development program; a commitment stipulated in Australia's current International Development Policy. To meet this commitment, ADDC recommends resources in the forthcoming Official Development Assistance (ODA) budget for 2024-25 and beyond are allocated to disability equity and rights initiatives, both to disability-specific initiatives as well as ensuring disability equity is a key objective and modality within broad programs.

Summary of recommendations

Resourcing disability equity and rights in Australia's international development program

1. Increase DFAT's central disability allocation by \$7.1m in FY2024-25 to a minimum of \$20m annually and increase in line with year-on-year ODA growth.
2. Establish a requirement that all new investments over \$3m will have a disability equity objective, in line with existing requirements for climate change and gender equality.
3. Set a 2030 target of 10 per cent of ODA being allocated to initiatives with disability equity as a principal objective, according to the DAC Disability policy marker.
4. Establish a target that 80 per cent of investments effectively address disability equity.

Stepping up in the Pacific

5. Commit ongoing support to the Pacific Regional Funding Mechanism beyond the co-design phase, to accelerate the implementation of the *Pacific Framework for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities 2016-2025*, including:
 - a. Committing \$40 million over four years from 2024-2025 to the Pacific Regional Funding Mechanism
 - b. Actively engaging with likeminded donors to provide support through the Mechanism.
6. Given the urgency of the need, allocate \$12million over four years from 2024-25 to resource catalytic improvements in disability specific services, to be absorbed by the Pacific Regional Funding Mechanism when it is operational, including:
 - a. The provision of appropriate, quality and affordable assistive technology across the region, working in partnership with Pacific disability led organisations and services.
 - b. Recognising the extensive lack of support services in the Pacific region, commission:
 - i. A regional situational analysis identifying what support services across the Pacific currently exist and what is needed to enable daily living and inclusion for people with disabilities, and provide recommendations to deliver the concrete, systemic changes required to progress this sector.
 - ii. Three to four pilot programs that are scalable to implement the recommendations of the regional analysis and support the development of identified support services.

Australia's ODA budget

7. Establish a plan and pathway for Government to reach its commitment to increase ODA to 0.5% of GNI, including meeting the OECD DAC average of 0.36% by the end of 2027.

Resourcing disability equity and rights in Australia's international development program

Now, more than ever, it is critical for Australia to have an ambitious, accountable, and resourced approach to disability equity and rights in their international efforts. ADDC welcomes the elevation in 2023 of disability equity as one of the three core areas of action for Australia's international development program, alongside gender equality and climate change.ⁱ As well as a commitment to being led by 'the experiences and expertise of people with disabilities when designing and implementing development activities'.ⁱⁱ Over more than a decade Australia has played an important role leading the donor community and partnering with Organisations of People with Disabilities (OPDs) in advancing disability inclusion. Continuing in this approach, we welcome DFAT's comprehensive consultations to listen and learn from people with disabilities across our region to inform the forthcoming International Disability Equity and Rights Strategy (IDEARS).

Central disability allocation

To realise these commitments and for Australia to lead the donor community in disability equity, more resources are required starting from the 2024-25 Federal Budget. The central disability allocation is a modest budget line within the ODA budget, however, has been foundational to DFAT furthering disability equity for more than a decade. The support, partnerships, technical expertise and global leadership this central allocation leverages are foundational to enabling DFAT to implement adequate disability equity in its programming.

The allocation had been frozen at \$12.9m for at least a decade, prior to being cut in 2020-21 and then restored to \$12.9m in the 2022-23 budget. As a result, the modest allocation is worth almost 20 percent less in 2024-25 than it was in 2014-15, when adjusted for inflation. To drive disability equity effectively this allocation needs to be increased in 2024-25 to a minimum of \$20m annually and increase in line with year-on-year ODA growth. A small increase of \$7.1m in 2024-25 would fund catalytic investments in the Indo-Pacific region that will unlock capacity and capability across the disability movement and support both development programs and social systems throughout the region to progress toward disability equity.

At its heart, this increase in funding could further the leadership, strategic goals, and growth of OPDs across the regions: the powerhouses of the disability movement. Growing the partnership and support to OPDs could enable them to pursue their priorities, to advocate and fulfil their duties as civil society organisations with the mandate to keep their governments to account and have greater influence in Australia's International Development program. This could be achieved through:

- Prioritised engagement with and support to OPDs throughout the International Development program, via the central disability allocation, in bilateral portfolios and through individual investments.
- Increased investment to provide predictable multi-year core budget support and capacity development for OPDs in the region, including increasing investment support to OPDs in Southeast Asia.
- Commitment to supporting the diversification of the movement through providing intentional, multi-year funding for under-represented and under-resourced groups to establish themselves and represent their constituencies.
- A significant investment to scope and support the establishment of representation where none currently exists – including across geographies, types of disability and aspect of inclusion and equity being focused on.
- Systematically investing in leadership development and peer collaboration and learning across the Indo-Pacific disability movement so the next generation of leaders have been supported to

develop their skills and capacity and to connect with each other. Achieved through a comprehensive approach to leadership development, spearheaded by the Indo-Pacific Disability Equity Leadership Program.

Targets and budgetary inputs

As the needs of people with disabilities in our region increase, and the move toward equity over tick box inclusion grows, we must go beyond commitments and pockets of good practice, and resource ambitious approaches in line with the disability movement's priorities that will shift the dial toward disability equity and rights in our region. Meaningful action on disability equity, particularly where it intersects with gender equality and other inequalities, will ensure Australia's development efforts reach those experiencing the most acute forms of poverty within our region and globally. Mandatory requirements, targets and resourcing are essential to making this a reality, working in complement together.

The *Joint call for action on disability equity and rights in Australia's International Development program*ⁱⁱⁱ is supported by 35 organisations and networks across the Australian development and disability sectors. The collective is seeking the Australian Government to commitment to an ambitious approach to disability equity that sets a target of 10 per cent of ODA being allocated to initiatives with disability equity as a principal objective, according to the DAC Disability policy marker, by 2030. And commit to an accountable approach to disability equity that requires all new investments over \$3m to have a disability equity objective, in line with commitments to climate change and gender equality, the international developments other two core areas of action. These commitments would see year-on-year allocation of the necessary resources to meet Australia's commitment to disability equity and rights, and most importantly, seek to transform the systematic discrimination and marginalization people with disabilities across our region navigate.

Recommendations

1. Increase DFAT's central disability allocation by \$7.1m in FY2024-25 to a minimum of \$20m annually and increase in line with year-on-year ODA growth.
2. Establish a requirement that all new investments over \$3m will have a disability equity objective, in line with existing requirements for climate change and gender equality.
3. Set a 2030 target of 10 per cent of ODA being allocated to initiatives with disability equity as a principal objective, according to the DAC Disability policy marker.
4. Establish a target that 80 per cent of investments effectively address disability equity.

Stepping up in the Pacific

Pacific states have established solid foundations for disability inclusive development in the region. The Pacific Island Forum's (PIF) *Pacific Framework for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities 2016-2025* provides a regional framework to strengthen the coordination of national initiatives for disability rights and amplify support for Pacific governments to fulfil the rights of people with disabilities.

The Pacific Regional Funding Mechanism is envisaged as a multi-donor platform to spark action and collaboration from global actors to network, share resources, research, harness collective resource and leverage each other for the purpose of more effective and scaled action on disability equity and rights.^{iv} The Mechanism is a key to unlocking progress toward the 2050 Strategy for the Blue Pacific Continent, the Agenda 2030 and Australia's development objectives.

Assistive technology and support services

Fundamental to achieving disability equity through DFAT's work is recognising and explicitly addressing the particular and wide-ranging barriers that people with disabilities face in participating in society, including in development efforts. They are often defined as 'pre-conditions to inclusion' and should be proactively considered and addressed in both disability-focused and mainstream activities. One vital area of the preconditions is the availability of affordable and appropriate assistive technology and support services that are required for people with disabilities to be able to fully access and benefit from policies and programs on an equal basis with others.^v

Assistive technology (AT) is an important enabler for people with disabilities as well as an enshrined right in Article 20 of the *Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities*. However, access to AT remains a critical challenge for too many across the Pacific. Through funding support from Australia, Pacific governments have been able to prioritise the development of AT and associated rehabilitation service's investment in AT in the Pacific with lasting impacts.^{vi} These pockets of success should inform the necessary scale up of AT services in the Pacific to meet need and facilitate active and meaningful participation for an accelerated number of people with disabilities. ADDC recommends an allocation of \$12million over four years from FY2024-25 to resource catalytic improvements in the provision of appropriate, quality and affordable assistive technology across the region. This could include:

- Supporting the establishment of a Pacific regional procurement facility for quality and affordable assistive technologies by 2025 working in partnership with Pacific disability led organisations and services.
- Provision of direct funding to partner governments, regional bodies or specialist agencies to ensure the initial training and ongoing professional development of specialist prosthetics and orthotics personnel in low-income settings.
- Providing funding for regular training of multi-disciplinary personnel within local systems in the procurement, maintenance, care and disposal of assistive technologies, recognising that a life-cycle approach to managing assistive technologies is important.
- Funding pilots and scale ups of effective, contextualised rights-based support services, including human supports such as sign language interpreters, sighted guides, tactile interpreters, and personal assistance.
- Commit to supporting a regional rehabilitation and assistive technology association to facilitate the sharing of resources and building of an evidence-base for future investment.

People with disabilities and the disability rights movement are actively calling for support systems that are reflective of the right to exercise their autonomy and direct their own lives.^{vii} The 2024-25 Budget and the IDEARS represent a key opportunity for Australia to respond to the call from the Pacific Disability Forum to take strategic action to improve access to community-based support services across the Pacific including personal assistance, sign language interpreters, mobility supports, supported decision making and housing support.^{viii} A initial step would be funding in the FY2024-45 budget a regional situational analysis identifying what support services across the Pacific currently exist, what is needed to enable daily living and inclusion for people with disabilities and provide recommendations to deliver concrete and systemic changes required to progress this sector. Followed by three to four pilot programs that are scalable to implement the recommendations of the regional report and support the development of identified support services.

Effective action on disability specific services, such as assistive technology and support service, in partnership with disability led organisations and services, is central to the proposed remit for the Pacific Regional

Funding Mechanism. As the Mechanism is currently at the early stages of development and given the urgency to address gaps in disability specific services in the region, we have included separate funding recommendations for the Mechanism and disability specific services. It is our expectation that, when the Mechanism becomes operational, activity and funding such as that identified on disability specific services would come under the operation of the Mechanism.

Recommendations

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 - a. Committing \$40 million over four years from 2024-25 to the Pacific Regional Funding Mechanism
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 - b. In recognising the extensive lack of support services in the Pacific region, commission:
 - i. A regional situational analysis identifying what support services across the Pacific currently exist and what is needed to enable daily living and inclusion for people with disabilities, and provide recommendations to deliver the concrete, systemic changes required to progress this sector.
 - ii. Three to four pilot programs that are scalable to implement the recommendations of the regional analysis and support the development of identified support services.

Australia's Overseas Development Assistance (ODA) budget

ADDC recommends that Australia extends its commitment to rebuilding the Australian development cooperation budget by identifying a plan and pathway to reach ODA of 0.5% GNI. While we welcome the Australian Government's commitments to increase development assistance year-on-year over the long term, the budget is still set to flatline in real terms from 2026. Australia continues to lag behind like-minded donors and will fall yet further behind over the coming years, despite our commitment to being a credible and generous international actor.

Recommendations

7. Establish a plan and pathway for Government to reach its commitment to increase ODA to 0.5% of GNI, including meeting the OECD DAC average of 0.36% by the end of 2027.

Contact

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ⁱ DFAT (2023), *Australia's International Development Policy*.

ⁱⁱ Ibid

ⁱⁱⁱ ADDC (2023), *Joint call for action on disability equity and rights in Australia's International Development program*, accessed <https://www.addc.org.au/disability-equity-and-rights-strategy/>

^{iv} Pacific Disability Forum (2024), *Pacific Disability Forum Submission to Australia's International Disability Equity & Rights Strategy*, https://pacificdisability.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/01/Pacific-Disability-Forum_IDEARS-Submission_FINAL_Jan-10_2024.pdf.

^v UNOHCRH (2016), *A/71/314: Report on Disability-Inclusive Policies*.

^{vi} Three examples of this are: [video from the Samoa Mobility Device Service](#), this [GReAT summit paper](#) (p. 208) and [DFAT performance report from Tonga](#).

^{vii} TCI (2022), *TCI Positionality on Community Inclusion*, accessed <https://whatweneed.tci-global.org/tci-positionality-on-community-inclusion-2022/>; Pacific Disability Forum (2024)

^{viii} Pacific Disability Forum (2024)