



Association for  
Children with a  
Disability

# Association for Children with Disability

## 2024 Federal Budget Submission

January 2024

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### **About ACD**

ACD is the leading advocacy service for children with disability and their families in Victoria. We are a not-for-profit organisation led by, and for, families of children with disability.

For more than 40 years we have been advocating to improve the lives of children with disability and their families. Our focus is families raising children with disability or developmental delay from birth to 18. We support all disability. We empower families, build inclusive practice and advocate to advance the rights of children with disability.

Our vision is an inclusive community where children with disability and their families thrive.

### **Acknowledgement**

ACD acknowledges the Traditional Owners of this land. We recognise their continuing connection to land, waters and community. We pay our respects to Elders past and present.

We commit to working in partnership with Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations as they lead change for Aboriginal communities, families, and children.

### **For more information contact**

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## **1. Increase funding for disability advocacy services**

*'Advocacy is essential' – Disability Royal Commission final report*

Disability advocacy organisations play a vital role in supporting people with disability, their families and carers. Access to advocacy can reduce the risk of discrimination and improve understanding of and access to human rights.

Each year, ACD supports 15,000 Victorian families raising children with disability through our Support Line, workshops, and information and resources. Family-led organisations like ACD play a pivotal role in helping families navigate and understand service systems, access the right support and enact their child's rights.

Despite the integral role disability advocacy organisations play, the Disability Royal Commission and NDIS Review found existing resourcing for disability advocacy is not meeting demand.

For example, there is currently no federal funding for Victorian child and family focused disability advocacy.

ACD endorses Disability Advocacy Network Australia's pre-budget submission that calls for a \$91 million investment in additional advocacy funding.

In particular, ACD urges the Australian Government to invest in funding shortfalls in National Disability Advocacy Program (NDAP), and immediately create a new grant round for organisations not funded under NDAP. This will help address gaps in the system and ensure children with disability and their families can access advocacy support when they need it.

## **2. Improve access to high-quality early childhood education for young children with disability**

Access to high-quality early childhood education and care (ECEC) can support children's development and set them up to excel in school and later in life. But too many children with disability face barriers to fully engaging in ECEC services.

Families report being turned away from services, having their child's hours restricted, and poor connection between ECEC services (based on whether they're funded by the Commonwealth or the state) and the NDIS.

The Inclusion Support Program review and Productivity Commission's draft report into ECEC mirrored what we hear from families: there's work to be done to improve early learning services for children with disability.

The Australian Government can improve early learning experiences for children with disability by ensuring this budget sets aside funding to implement the recommendations of both reviews so children with disability can take advantage of the benefits of high-quality ECEC.

### 3. Increase representation of children with disability in tv and film

*'Authentic representation of disabled people on screen can be a powerful way to challenge societal stereotypes, attitudes and unconscious biases' – Screen Australia, Seeing Ourselves 2*

When children see themselves reflected in stories – from tv and film to literature – it can influence how they see themselves and how others see them. Good representation can help children form positive identities and create a world of possibilities.

However, children with disability are severely underrepresented in Australian tv and film.<sup>1</sup>

While Australia is developing an Arts and Disability Associated Plan under Australia's Disability Strategy 2021–2031, there are opportunities to improve community attitudes towards disability by increasing representation across the arts.

The Australian Government can improve community attitudes towards disability and support confident, aspirational children by investing in an additional, dedicated funding stream to increase representation of children with disability in tv and film. This could be overseen by Screen Australia and include intersectionality as a consideration in the application process to ensure it captures the diversity of children with disability.

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<sup>1</sup> [Seeing Ourselves 2 - Diversity, equity and inclusion in Australian TV drama \(screenaustralia.gov.au\)](https://www.screenaustralia.gov.au/seeing-ourselves-2)