

ILC Funding decision threatens the viability of Disability Advocacy services in NSW

Dear Minister Rishworth, Minister for Social Services, and Minister Bill Shorten, Minister for the NDIS,

As the NSW Disability Advocacy Network (NDAN), the Sector Coordinator for Disability Advocacy organisations in NSW, we present a collective statement from 18 NSW Disability Advocacy organisations regarding the recent funding decisions for the Information, Linkages and Capacity (ILC) program.

The Department of Social Services (DSS) decided in May 2024 to fund predominantly new programs, neglecting most existing critical disability support services, which have been built and embedded in communities over the course of the last ILC grant, especially within NSW.

Of the **60 NSW-based organisations** with programs in individual capacity building (ICB) and social and community building (SCB) which DSS deemed important enough to extend funding from 2023 to mid-2024, **only 13 have received funding in the latest DSS ILC Individual Capacity Building Grant round**. Additionally, **only 9 of the 37 national organisations**, which also serve NSW, that received the previous ILC ICB & SCB extension funding have been granted funding in this round. This means just 22% of NSW projects and 24% of national projects in NSW can continue their work.

Only 3 out of 18 NSW NDAN Members who received extension funding until December 2024 will continue to be funded. Many organisations rely on ILC grants, and their removal threatens the viability of disability advocacy in NSW. **This is a catastrophic threat to the viability of not only the disability support sector in NSW but also the disability advocacy sector in our state.**

This decision jeopardises the continuity of vital support services for people with disabilities, their families, and carers. Relationships and trust built over years will be disrupted, leaving a gap until the proposed but not-yet-defined Foundational Supports funding becomes available next year. Without interim funding, many organisations will close or cut back services, leading to a loss of expertise and increased pressure on government services.

In NSW, this could mean that around a quarter of the population will suddenly be unable to access the individual peer mentoring to guide them through difficult times in their lives; workshops and courses that provide them with skills to better contribute to society – including being more financially independent and more efficiently managing/accessing their NDIS support; peer groups that reduce loneliness, overwhelm and poor mental health; advocacy on an individual as well as systemic level to help them find their voice or give voice to those who cannot speak up for themselves.

Given the current high demand for disability support services, it is critical to bridge the gap and maintain essential services until funding for Foundational Supports is delivered. We ask that funding arrangements be extended a year until there is time for the Federal Government to formulate its approach to funding Foundational supports.

We request an urgent meeting with yourselves and the Hon. Kate Washington MP, Minister for Disabilities in NSW to discuss this issue and what can be done to prevent the loss of expertise and services across NSW.

Kind regards,

Members of the NSW Disability Advocacy Network



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