



Australian Government

Department of Health, Disability and Ageing

Inclusive Communities Fund

Consultation Paper

August 2026



Summary

The Australian Government will provide \$200 million over 3 years to establish the Inclusive Communities Fund (the Fund). The Fund will build capability among community organisations to deliver inclusive and accessible services. This will give people with disability more options to genuinely participate in their communities.

The Department of Health, Disability and Ageing (the department) wants your ideas about how the Fund should work. We want to know:

- What types of community activities should the Fund support?
- What would help community organisations provide more inclusive services?

You can get involved by:

- making a submission
- submitting a video (including in Auslan)
- email
- phone call.

Submissions for this consultation are open until 31 August 2026.

Feedback from the disability community will help shape the final design of the Fund.

What we are doing

The Australian Government will provide \$200 million over 3 years to establish the Inclusive Communities Fund (the Fund). The Fund will help create more opportunities for people with disability to take part in community life.

The Fund will support people to participate in social, recreational, arts, sporting, cultural and other community activities. For example, this could include joining a sports club, theatre group, community garden, volunteering group, multicultural organisation, or other community organisation.

The Fund will achieve this by providing funding to support community organisations to strengthen their capability to offer more inclusive activities. It will help make sure people with disability have greater opportunities to participate in their community.

The Fund will be designed in consultation with people with disability.

Once the design of the Fund is finalised, it will run for 3 years from 2026–27 to 2028–29. Funding is expected to start by June 2027.

Why we are establishing the Fund

Building inclusive communities is a policy priority for *Australia's Disability Strategy 2021-2031*. Meaningful community participation helps people to feel a sense of belonging, build confidence, strengthen skills, form meaningful relationships, and enhance their wellbeing and safety. It is about creating opportunities for people with disability to feel welcome, develop lasting friendships, and be recognised as valued members of their community.

The Government already funds several programs that support community inclusion for people with disability. These include:

- The Information, Linkages and Capacity Building (ILC) Program provides information and capacity building supports for all people with disability, regardless of whether they are eligible for the NDIS. The ILC Program will end when all current grants finish (from July 2027 through to the end of 2028).
- From 1 July 2027, the Government will fund the Disability Peer Support and Connections (DPSC) Program. The program will provide time-limited grants to eligible organisations to deliver peer-led activities to strengthen networks, empower people with disability and foster meaningful connections across diverse communities. This includes a Community Capacity Building stream, which aims to build the capability of community organisations to adapt their services, so they are disability-inclusive and accessible. The DPSC Program will replace the ILC Program as currently funded ILC grants end.
- Accessible Australia is a national program that helps make community spaces easier to use for people with disability. It provides funding to improve built spaces and natural areas, such as buildings, playgrounds, beaches and parks.

- The Local Government Disability Inclusion Guide, an online toolkit developed with local governments (also known as councils). It helps councils improve disability inclusion in their services, buildings, facilities and community programs.

The Fund will work alongside these programs. It will give people with disability, including NDIS participants, more choices to take part in community life. By helping community organisations become more inclusive, the Fund will benefit all people with disability and the wider community.

The Fund will not pay for things organisations are already legally required to do. This includes making reasonable adjustments as required under the *Disability Discrimination Act 1992*.

There are other changes expected to happen to NDIS funding for Social, Civic and Community Participation supports and Capacity Building Daily Activity supports. Information about these changes is available at: www.health.gov.au/our-work/ndis-legislation-changes. The department acknowledges that people with disability, their families, carers and kin, and the broader disability sector have expressed strong concerns about these changes. These changes are not the focus of this paper.

The department will consult separately on NDIS Social and Community Participation market reform. This includes longer-term reforms to how Social and Community Participation supports are designed and delivered, to improve participant outcomes and ensure value for money.

What we have heard

To inform this paper, we met with Disability Representative Organisations, state, territory and local governments, and several community organisations. We heard that:

- Inclusive communities need to work for all people with disability.
- Projects should build relationships, belonging and meaningful community participation and not only support attendance in community activities.
- It is important to address attitudinal barriers, not just physical barriers.
- Community building often works best when it is locally led and responsive to the needs of the individual community, and local governments can play an important role.
- The Fund should support partnership arrangements that encourage disability-led organisations to share their knowledge with community organisations.
- The Fund should not return to old programs that separated people with disability from the wider community and did not give people choice and control.
- People need practical support to take part in community activities, such as Auslan interpreters or accessible transport. When we design the Fund, we should consider whether these supports are already funded by other programs.
- The Fund should work alongside other government programs, including state and territory programs.

We also considered findings and recommendations about community inclusion from the Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People with Disability, and the Independent Review into the NDIS.

How the Fund could work

Our early ideas about the Fund are set out below. The final design will be informed by feedback from the community. We welcome all feedback, including feedback that disagrees with these ideas.

Who could receive funding?

We expect the Fund will support not-for-profit community organisations that provide, or want to provide, opportunities for people with disability to participate in social activities in their community. Types of community organisations that may be eligible to apply for funding include:

- sports and recreation organisations
- arts and cultural organisations
- multicultural organisations
- First Nations community organisations
- not-for-profit or volunteering groups, for example environmental conservation groups
- local councils, and places they operate such as libraries and community centres
- other organisations which support people to participate in their local community.

Organisations would need to show they are working with people with disability. We expect partnership arrangements between community organisations and disability-led organisations to be a good way to do this. This could include partnerships between community organisations and disability advocacy groups, representative organisations or NDIS providers. These partnerships will help community organisations build the skills and knowledge to deliver more inclusive and accessible services.

Local governments have strong connections with their communities and understand local needs, opportunities and priorities. We want to hear your views about the role local governments could play in the Fund.

We also want to hear how the Fund could help make sure people with disability can participate in their communities, regardless of whether they live in metropolitan, regional, rural or remote areas.

The Fund will not provide funding directly to individuals.

We expect the Fund will not provide funding to:

- NDIS service providers, although funding could support community organisations that deliver some NDIS services as well as broader community activities
- for-profit community organisations
- mainstream service systems, such as hospitals, schools, housing and transport services
- businesses such as shopping centres, restaurants or cinemas.

What could funding be used for?

Funding will support community organisations to make their services more inclusive and accessible for people with disability. This includes for NDIS participants and other people with disability who face significant and complex barriers.

The Fund is a time-limited investment (over a three-year period) that will focus on projects that create lasting change. Building the capability, capacity and confidence of community organisations will help them to embed inclusive practices into their ongoing activities.

Funding could support:

- seeking expert advice on how to make services more inclusive
- staff training on disability inclusion
- building lasting partnerships between community and disability organisations
- small purchases that make community activities easier for people with disability to access
- other projects to change how community organisations operate.

The Fund is not expected to pay for direct service delivery. This will help make sure services do not stop when funding ends. It will help the Fund to create lasting change.

Have your say

Purpose of this consultation

We want to hear your views about how the Fund could be set up to support community connection, participation and inclusion for people with disability. Your experiences, ideas and feedback will help shape how the Fund will work.

We acknowledge the consultation period is shorter than we would like. This is because we need to finalise the design of the Fund in time for funding to start by June 2027.

How to get involved

You can get involved by:

- making a submission
- submitting a video (including in Auslan)
- responding by email
- requesting a phone call to share your views.

Consultation questions

We want to hear from people with disability (including NDIS participants), families, carers and kin about:

1. What community activities would you like the Fund to support?
 - Are there any good examples of community activities you have participated in or know about?
 - Have you faced barriers to participating in organisations in your community? If so, what could help you take part in the future?
2. How can we make sure the Fund works well for all people with disability? This includes for First Nations people, LGBTQIA+ people, people from different cultural and language backgrounds, younger people, older people, people with low income, and people in regional, rural and remote communities.

We want to hear from Disability Representative Organisations, advocates and community organisations about:

1. What support, resources or changes would help organisations become more inclusive and accessible for people with disability?
 - How could community organisations partner with disability-led organisations to achieve this?
2. What activities should the Fund support, given that it will not pay for service delivery?
 - For example, staff training, advice on how to make services more inclusive, or other accessibility changes.
3. What role could local governments play in supporting community inclusion?
4. What is the best way for community organisations to build meaningful and lasting inclusion?
 - How can we make sure the benefits of the Fund continue after the 3-year funding period ends?

Submissions for this consultation are open from 3 August 2026 to 31 August 2026.

Questions?

Email: InclusiveCommunitiesFund@health.gov.au

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