



How you can help by lobbying your local MP for the help and support people with cognitive disability need when they get caught up in the criminal justice system.

What the issue is and what we can do about it:

People with intellectual disability, acquired brain injury and other cognitive disabilities like autism could soon be interrogated by police and questioned in court without a qualified support person, with time getting tight for the NSW government to commit to funding the critically important Justice Advocacy Service (JAS). The funding for JAS currently ceases in June this year.

Run by the Intellectual Disability Rights Service (IDRS), JAS provides support to people with cognitive disability who are victims of crime, witnesses or accused of crimes. The service helps people understand what is happening and exercise their rights. For 17 years, the Government has funded IDRS to perform this role including a full state-wide service since 2019.

Last year the NSW Government also stopped funding the very successful pilot Cognitive Impairment Diversion Programme (CIDP) despite strong support from disability, academic and legal figures.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are significantly overrepresented in the justice system. Over 28% of the clients of JAS and CIDP have been Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander people.

We want the NSW Government to commit to an ongoing state-wide JAS and a new state-wide diversion programme in the June 2021 budget so that people with cognitive disability will get a fair go as victims, witnesses or people accused of crimes.

We need you to ask your local MP to make representatives on your behalf for this commitment to the Premier and the Attorney General.

How you can lobby your local MP:

1. Find out who is your local MP

If you don't know which electorate you are in you can go to <https://roll.elections.nsw.gov.au/areafinder> and type in your suburb or postcode.

To find the name of your MP, click on **View District Profile** for your district.

Once you know which electorate you are in, you can find the contact details for your local MP on the NSW Parliament website on this link.

<https://www.parliament.nsw.gov.au/members/pages/all-members.aspx?house=LA>

2. Contact your MP

Don't forget to be polite when you phone or email your MP.

Below is a template email you can send or you can write your own email.

Template email: (to copy and paste)

Dear (name of local MP)

I am one of over 14,000 people who has signed Council for Intellectual Disability's petition calling for long term funding for vitally important help, support and diversion programmes for people with cognitive disability who get caught up in the justice system.

As my local Member of Parliament, I ask you to make representations on my behalf to the Premier and the Attorney

General calling for funding to be urgently confirmed for the Justice Advocacy Service (JAS) and a state-wide diversion programme for people with cognitive disability.

Funding for JAS runs out in June. JAS provides support to people with cognitive disability who are victims of crime, witnesses or accused of crimes. The service helps people understand what is happening and exercise their rights.

Last year the NSW Government also stopped funding the very successful pilot Cognitive Impairment Diversion Programme (CIDP) despite strong support from disability, academic and legal figures.

Over 70 eminent Australians have now written an [Open Letter](#) to the Premier and Attorney General calling on the government to urgently renew funding for the JAS and commit to a state-wide diversion programme for people with cognitive disability.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are significantly overrepresented in the justice system. Over 25% of the clients of JAS and CIDP have been Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander people.

We want the NSW Government to show leadership by committing to an ongoing state-wide JAS and a new state-wide diversion programme so people with cognitive disability will get a fair go as victims, witnesses or people accused of crime.

Yours sincerely

(Your name)

Please let us know what your local MP said in response to your email by forwarding us a copy.

Email: advocacy@cid.org.au