

The health of people with intellectual disability

Open letter to all parties contesting the federal election 2022

We applaud the development of the National Roadmap for Improving the Health of People with Intellectual Disability which was released by Health Minister Greg Hunt in August 2021. We also applaud initial actions taken towards implementation of the Roadmap.

The Roadmap provides a detailed plan for addressing the stark health inequalities that people with intellectual disability face. In recent years, evidence of these inequalities has continued to grow, including findings that people with intellectual disability die up to 27 years earlier than other people and are at least twice as likely to die from potentially avoidable causes. They are less likely to receive preventative health care and four times more likely to be hospitalised.

After a two week hearing in 2020, the Disability Royal Commission found that “people with cognitive disability have been and continue to be subject to systemic neglect in the Australian health system”.

We must urgently address the stark and sometimes deadly health inequalities faced by people with intellectual disabilities.

What is needed now is concerted action to implement the National Roadmap in accordance with its ten year timeframe including the scheduled completion of a large amount of work within the first three years.

An essential element of action is the earliest possible funding of a National Centre of Excellence in Intellectual Disability Health. This Centre is a vital driver of action on the Roadmap including by leading research and development of best practice and being a hub of health information and training resources for people with intellectual disability, their supporters and health professionals.

We call on all parties to join the Government’s commitment to the National Roadmap.

We call on all parties to commit to fund the National Centre of Excellence in Intellectual Disability Health within the next 12 months.

As campaigners with intellectual disability have said many times, “Our health counts. Can we count on you?”

Yours sincerely,

Dylan Alcott AO
Australian of the Year 2022

Robyn Kruk AO
Former Director-General, NSW Health and Premier’s Department
Former CEO, National Mental Health Commission

Adjunct Professor John Walsh AO
Associate Commissioner on the Productivity Commission Inquiry into Disability Care and Support

Jane Halton AO PSM
Former Secretary, Australian Government Departments of Health and Finance

Shu Hua Chan
Former Chairperson, Council for Intellectual Disability
Keynote Speaker, Our Health Counts Campaign
Member, Roadmap Implementation Governance Group

Judy Huett
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Member, Roadmap Implementation Governance Group
Former member, NDIS Independent Advisory Council

Professor Fiona Stanley AC
Founding Director, Telethon Kids Institute
Australian of the Year 2003

Dr Karen Price
President, Royal Australian College of General Practitioners

Professor John Wilson AM
President, Royal Australasian College of Physicians

Associate Professor Vinay Lakra
President, Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Psychiatrists

Dr Omar Khorshid
President, Australian Medical Association

Dr Jenny Proimos
President, Academy of Child and Adolescent Health

Claire Hewat
CEO, Allied Health Professionals Australia

Gail Mulcair
CEO, Speech Pathology Australia

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Former CEO, Children's Hospital at Westmead

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President of the Asian Federation of Psychiatric Associations

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Honorary Professor, Flinders University and University of Sydney

Ian Webster AO
Emeritus Professor of Public Health and Community Medicine, UNSW

Liz Marles
Former President, Royal Australian College of General Practitioners

Maria Tomasic
Former President RANZCP
RANZCP Medal of Honour 2021

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Scientia Professor of Psychiatry, UNSW

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President, Australian Association of Developmental Disability Medicine

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Co-Director, NHMRC Centre of Research Excellence in Disability and Health

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Former Executive Director Sydney Children's Hospital
Inaugural NSW Chief Paediatrician

Rob Moodie
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Emerita Professor

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Head, WHO Collaborating Centre for Strengthening Rehabilitation Capacity in Health Systems

Kerry Goulston AO
Emeritus Professor, Sydney Medical School

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Ambassador 2009, Don't DIS My ABILITY

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Catherine McAlpine, CEO
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Angus Graham OAM, Chair
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Down Syndrome Australia

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Member, Roadmap Implementation Governance Group

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Member, Expert Advisory Group for Co-design of Centre of Excellence

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President, Australian Society on Intellectual Disability

Dr Mathew Lim
President, Australia New Zealand Academy of Special Needs Dentistry

Dr Kerrie Punshon
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Professor of Criminology, UNSW

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Past Chair, Disability Advisory Council of Australia

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Former Secretary, Department of Health NSW

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CEO, People with Disability Australia

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Leanne Beagley
CEO, Mental Health Australia

Rachel Green
CEO, Sane Australia

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CEO, Flourish Australia

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(PANDDA)

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Managing Director, Microboards Australia

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CEO, Achieve Australia

Leanne Pearman
CEO, WA Individualised Services

Liz Forsyth
CEO, Northcott

Dani Fraillon
CEO, Get Skilled Access

Sam Paior
CEO, The Growing Space
Impact 25 Probono Award 2021

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Chair, ASID Queensland Division

Kerry Stubbs
Chair, Northcott Innovation

Andrew Richardson
CEO, Aruma

Gordon Trewern
CEO, Nulsen Disability Services

Claire Robbs
CEO, Life Without Barriers

Hayley Dean
CEO, Melba Support Services

Julia Squire
CEO, Ability Options

Margaret Bowen
CEO, The Disability Trust

Damon Williams
Partner, SAL Consulting

Joanna Quilty
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John Engeler
CEO, Shelter NSW
Chair, National Shelter

Robert Tickner AO
Chair, Justice Reform Initiative

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National Disability Award for Community Excellence 2017

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Former President, Anti Discrimination Board of NSW

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Past President, International Academy of Law and Mental Health

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Professor Patrick Keyzer
Dean of Law, Australian Catholic University

Cameron Stewart
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University of Sydney Law School

Roger West AM
Former President, Guardianship Tribunal NSW
Former Community Services Commissioner NSW

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CEO, Developmental Disability WA

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CEO, Parent to Parent, Queensland

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General Manager, Speak Out Association of Tasmania

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CEO, Self Advocacy Sydney

Wendy Prowse
CEO, ADACAS Advocacy

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CEO, Queensland Advocacy Incorporated

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CEO, Queenslanders with Disability Network

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Dr Helen Beange AM
Founder, Developmental Disability Health Unit

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Director Clinical Services, Centre for Developmental Disability Health, Melbourne
Minister for Health General Practitioner Award 2014

Andrew Cashin
Professor of Autism and Nursing
Southern Cross University

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President, Fragile X Association of Australia
Former Director, New York State Institute for Basic Research (IBR) in Developmental Disabilities

Professor Harry McConnell
Director Institute for the Clinical Advancement of Neuroplasticity,
Griffith University

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Emeritus Professor, Brain & Mind Centre
University of Sydney

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Developmental Paediatrician and former President, Australian Association for

Developmental Disability Medicine

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Former Director, Centre for Developmental Disability Health Victoria

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Public Health Physician
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Self-advocate
Convenor, Brisbane Hot Topics Group, Queenslanders with Disability Network

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Parent advocate

Jeanette Moss AM
Parent advocate and former Chair, Council for Intellectual Disability

Belinda Epstein-Frisch AM
Family advocate

Jeremy Ward
Parent advocate and first CEO, Queensland Advocacy Incorporated

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Parent advocate and past Deputy Chair, Disability Advisory Council of Australia

Alan Robinson
Advocate, WA

Christine Agius OAM
Northern Sydney Region Families and Friends of People with Disability

Brian Donovan
Geelong Parent Network

Dr Rebecca Kelly
Parent advocate and President, Down Syndrome Tasmania

Professor Bruce Bonyhady AM
Executive Chair and Director, Melbourne Disability Institute, University of Melbourne

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Former CEO, Intellectual Disability Services Council, SA

Robert Griew
Former senior official,
Disability, Health and Education programs
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Endorsements as at 18 April 2022