

OPEN LETTER TO POLITICIANS CONTESTING THE FEDERAL ELECTION 2025

We write to stress the importance of ongoing robust action on the stark health inequalities facing people with intellectual disability. This should be a high priority for the next federal government.

The Australian research has found that, compared with the general population, people with intellectual disability:

- Suffer over twice the rate of potentially avoidable deaths, with 38% of deaths being potentially avoidable.
- Have around four times the rate of potentially avoidable hospitalisations.
- Die 27 years earlier.

Intellectual disability is not a medical condition.

These shocking health inequalities reflect factors including inadequate training of health professionals in the needs of people with intellectual disability and lack of incentives to provide the time and continuity of care that people with intellectual disability need in healthcare settings.

We applaud first steps taken by the most recent Coalition and Labor Governments to address this situation including the development and initial implementation of the ten-year National Roadmap for Improving the Health of People with Intellectual Disability and the establishment of the National Centre of Excellence in Intellectual Disability Health.

However, these are only first steps.

Government must not be tempted to think it has taken some significant steps and now can reduce the momentum of reform. A reduction in momentum would result in yet more suffering for people with intellectual disability and a wasted opportunity to maximise the efficiency and effectiveness of the health system.

It is vital that the National Roadmap is fully and effectively implemented, and that action is further informed by the Final Report of the Disability Royal Commission. Key focuses include ensuring that health professionals have the training and time to provide quality care to people with intellectual disability.

We look to the political parties and candidates to make renewed and robust commitments to action. People with intellectual disability deserve the same opportunity to lead long and healthy lives as a large proportion of the population takes for granted.

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