

March 2026



GdA Welcomes New Indigenous Advocate Malachi Lampard

About Malachi

Malachi is a proud Ngarrindjeri man who is excited to bring his lived experience & cultural knowledge to advocacy. Coming from a background in Corrections, he has seen firsthand the barriers & challenges that people with a disability face in the justice system. He is committed to using that perspective to create meaningful change and better outcomes for his mob. He is looking forward to bringing authenticity, accountability & a strong community focus to his advocacy work.

Malachi has hit the ground running & has begun establishing relationships with various external stakeholders & completed a huge amount of training since he started in November. GdA received National Disability Advocacy Program funding to employ an Indigenous Advocate for the Indigenous Community Advocacy (Pilot) & GdA hopes that the funding will continue into the future for Malachi to continue this essential work.



IMPROVING SERVICE AGREEMENTS

The NDIS working with the NDIS Quality and Safeguards Commission to explore what guidance and materials could make service agreements easy to understand, fair, and supportive for everyone.

NDIS wants to hear from participants, families & carers, or providers. There's a section for each group including idea walls & a survey. This is to help the NDIS understand your needs and experiences.

The link below NDIS consultation closes Feb 27

[Click on link below to participate in the online consultation.](#)

[Improving service agreements | NDIS Engage](#)

THE AUSTRALIAN OPEN TENNIS USES AI FOR PEOPLE WITH VISION & SENSORY ISSUES

The Australian Open and Infosys have introduced MatchFeel, an AI-powered accessibility innovation that transforms live tennis data into tactile, sensory experiences for blind and visually impaired fans, showing how governed AI can make sport more inclusive.

The Australian Open has long been known for pushing the boundaries of fan experience, but at the 2026 tournament, that innovation has taken a meaningful step forward in accessibility. Through an eight-year collaboration with Infosys, Tennis Australia has introduced Infosys Topaz Fabric – an enterprise AI platform designed to deliver human-centred technology at scale. This year's deployment demonstrates how governed AI can move beyond entertainment and into genuine inclusion.

At the heart of this evolution is **MatchFeel**, an AI-powered accessibility tool built specifically for blind and visually impaired spectators. Rather than relying solely on audio descriptions, MatchFeel translates live tennis match data into a tactile, sensory experience that allows users to physically feel the flow of the game.



Using Infosys Topaz Fabric, the system processes real-time match feeds and converts ball trajectory data into physical outputs. A magnetic ring moves across an engraved miniature court model, tracking the ball's position as rallies unfold. Haptic vibrations communicate speed and direction, synchronised with audio commentary to create a multi-layered understanding of play.

The result is an immersive experience that turns tennis into something that can be followed through touch as well as sound – a shift that opens the sport to audiences who have historically been excluded from the full live experience.

MatchFeel has been piloted with selected users at the 2026 Australian Open, offering a clear example of how AI, when designed with people at the centre, can democratise access rather than widen gaps.

This collaboration shows what is possible when enterprise technology is applied with purpose: not just making sport smarter, but making it fairer, more inclusive, and more human.

Participant First for participants, families & carers

Where your Feedback can help, and have your voices heard for NDIS reforms

<https://myform.ndis.gov.au/?src=https://forms.ndis.gov.au/external/participantfirstinformationform>

The NDIS is updating “the my NDIS mobile” app to improve accessibility, simplify navigation & make it easier for participants to manage their plans.

The app works alongside the [my NDIS participant portal](#) & [myplace portal](#). Together, the app & portals help participants easily & flexibly self-manage their NDIS funds.

You will receive a notification in the app when the changes are available to manually update.

The updates will improve accessibility by:

- making the app more predictable and easier to learn for a wide variety of users
- using clearer error messages and guidance
- increasing support for large text, so users can select their preferred text size
- introducing dark mode where a user has this activated in their phone settings
- for participants who use VoiceOver, removing announcements after every keystroke, making it easier to complete forms.

There is no change to the way participants manage their NDIS plan with the updated app.

Find out more about how to update your app and the operating system requirements on the [my NDIS mobile app](#) page.

If you have any questions about these changes, or have any trouble using the updated app, contact the [National Contact Centre](#).

REAPPOINTED NDIA BOARD CHAIR

The Australian Government has reappointed Mr Kurt Fearnley AO as Chair of the NDIA Board.

Mr Fearnley, an accomplished Australian Paralympian and disability advocate, became the first person with disability to serve as Chair of the NDIA Board when he was appointed to the role in September 2022.

Since then, Mr Fearnley has lent his extensive experience and insight as a government director to the Board, offering strong leadership and strategic guidance during a pivotal time in the NDIS history.

His dedicated stewardship of the NDIA Board has helped ensure the scheme remains on track, meets its objectives and continues to deliver for the more than 750,000 NDIS participants across Australia.

Under the NDIS Act 2013, the NDIA Board is responsible for overseeing the strategic direction, governance and performance of the NDIS.





CONGRATULATIONS TO 10 DISABILITY ADVOCATES FOR RECEIVING AUSTRALIA DAY AWARDS 2026

Ten Advocates within the disability sector have been honoured as part of Australia Day celebrations across the country, with architects, sportspeople and health experts among those recognised for their contributions to their fields.

Mr Paul Marcus Crake, Mr Ernest William Drew, and Mr Anthony David Rice were presented with their OAMs for services to people with disability, while Ms Anna Louise Mezger received her OAM for service to sports administration, specifically for her role as Vice Chair of the Board of Directors for Special Olympics Australia.

Ms Eliza Hull was also honoured with a Medal of the Order of Australia (OAM), for service to people with disability, and to the arts.

Tasmania's Carolyn Patricia Frohmader received her Officer of the Order of Australia (AO) award for distinguished service to people with disability, particularly for her work as a dedicated human rights campaigner for women and girls, given her role as the long-serving Executive Director of Women with Disabilities Australia.

The Honourable Steven Spence Marshall was also awarded an AO for distinguished service to people with disability and the Parliament of South Australia.

In the field of health, Dr Sophie Bilicki Holmes, was honoured with the Member of the Order of Australia (AM) award for significant service to mental health, family therapy, and to people with disability. Ms Farah Percy Madon also received an AM for significant service to architecture, recognised for her role as lead author of the NDIS Specialist Disability Accommodation (SDA) Design Standard, which sets minimum requirements for housing for people with disability.

New South Wales athlete Kelly Wren was presented with her AM for significant service to tennis, to basketball, and to athletes with an intellectual disability.

NDIS rules: Public consultation on new framework planning

This consultation is about the new framework planning rules.

New framework plans are designed to make NDIS planning clearer and more transparent. New framework plans will start from mid-2026 for some participants who are over the age of 16.

It will be a phased introduction so many participants will not experience any change for some time. Participants will be told before anything changes for them, and support will be provided by the NDIA.

The NDIS is still developing the rules explaining how new framework planning will work in practice. They want to hear from NDIS participants and the disability community to get the rules right

The Department of Health, Disability and Ageing is making changes to NDIS planning. This will make sure the process is easier, more consistent and fairer for participants. They are working with state and territory governments and the disability community to plan for how these changes will work.

To put the changes into action, some existing rules will be updated and new NDIS rules will be made. The rules set out how the NDIS Act works in practice.

The new way of planning has four steps in the participant journey.

Step one is preparing for a support needs assessment. This is when the NDIA contacts a participant and gives them information to help them prepare for their support needs assessment.

Step two is the support needs assessment. This is where a participant meets with an NDIA assessor to discuss their daily life support needs and plan preferences. The assessor then submits the support needs assessment report to the NDIA.

Step three is building a plan. This is when the NDIA uses the support needs assessment report to develop a participant's plan and create a total funding amount. Participants receive the report and their NDIS plan with an explanation on how the budget was created.

Step four is using a plan. At this step, participants have the option of an implementation meeting with the NDIA. Participants use the NDIS supports list to choose, purchase and claim for their support with the new plan.

The department wants to hear from NDIS participants and the disability community about these rules to make sure they get them right.

[Click here>>>> Have your say](#)

or more information and to share your thoughts on the rules, visit the consultation page.

<https://consultations.health.gov.au/ndis/nfp-public-consultation/>

CLOSES MARCH 6

People With Disability Australia representing Australians at the MidSumma Festival in Melbourne with the banner InFocus Queer & Disabled

Melbourne's Midsumma Festival is currently was held in January and February. People with Disability Australia (PWDA) are joined the parade under the banner InFocus: Queer & Disabled.

The theme, developed in consultation among PWDA members, aims to shine a spotlight on people who are both members of the LGBTIQIA+ community and living with disability.

The national disability rights group hope to spark conversations about centring LGBTIQIA+ people with disability in public life, policy and community spaces, through celebration, visibility and advocacy.

PWDA President Jeramy Hope said pride events like Midsumma are vital spaces where LGBTIQIA+ people with disability can be visible on their own terms.

“Pride is about joy and visibility, but it’s also about belonging. It’s about creating spaces where LGBTIQIA+ people with disability feel safe to show up as their whole selves,” Jeramy said. “Midsumma is an opportunity for people to tell their own stories, to be proud of who they are, and to be safely and authentically who they are. That sense of belonging is powerful, especially for LGBTIQIA+ people with disability who are too often excluded or overlooked.”

PWDA’s national survey of LGBTIQIA+ people with disability found that discrimination and negative experiences remains widespread, particularly in healthcare and support systems.

Sixty-five per cent of respondents reported experiencing discrimination from healthcare workers, support workers, carers or family members because of their LGBTIQIA+ identity, while 64 per cent said they had not been believed or had their identity ignored.

Jeramy adds that visibility must be matched by systemic change.

“Pride is powerful because it makes us visible, but visibility alone is not enough. LGBTIQIA+ people with disability are still facing discrimination, inconsistency and barriers to healthcare, inaccessible services and exclusion from community spaces,” Jeramy said.

“InFocus is about shifting the narrative. It’s about centring our leadership, demanding inclusion by design, and reminding decision-makers that disability rights and LGBTIQIA+ are human rights.



R.A.I.S.E Your Voice groups are in: Rainbow,
Horsham, Stawell, Ararat and Daylesford 😊



R.A.I.S.E
YOUR VOICE

Regional
Action for
Inclusion through
Self-Advocacy &
Empowerment



R.A.I.S.E Your Voice

R.A.I.S.E Your Voice is a group that teaches you about human rights and self-advocacy and how to speak up for yourself. We will support you to use those skills in your community to make change and advocate. Join the group and see what differences you can make in your community!

This group is for anyone over 18
There will be up to 8 people in the group
We will meet regularly
You will learn new skills in self-advocacy
It is all Peer-led ~ You decide what we focus on
It is FREE!

To find out more contact:
Carol at Grampians disAbility Advocacy
Phone: 0455 226 442
Email: projects@grampiansadvocacy.org.au



R.A.I.S.E Group Xmas Party

Pictured at the
Horsham

Neighbourhood
House
Left to Right
Charlie, Tiffany,
Zoey, Graham,
Naomi and
Andrea.



Free travel myki
Eligible people can travel for free on public transport

You may be eligible for one of the free travel passes, which offer free public transport, all the time.

View the eligibility criteria of these forms in the sections below.

- [Access Travel Pass \(medical condition\) application form](#)
- [Scooter and wheelchair free travel form](#)
- [Vision impaired free travel form](#)
- [EDA/TPI ex-personnel free travel form](#)

[Free travel myki - Transport Victoria](#)

Or call [1800 800 007](tel:1800800007) or For TTY (teletypewriter) call [9619 2727](tel:96192727)

Photographic exhibition shares personal stories from First Nations peoples with disabilities

A powerful exhibition featuring photographs of Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander people with disability has been called a milestone for inclusion & representation. First exhibited at the United Nations in Geneva more than a decade ago, it's now being shown again on home soil in its most accessible format. [A warning to Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander viewers that the video \(link below\) contains images of people who have died.](#)

[Photographic exhibition shares personal stories from First Nations peoples with disabilities | SBS News | SBS News](#)



What does GdA do?

- *Help you write a letter or submission to represent your interests
- *Make a telephone call with/for you or help get info to resolve a concern
- *Find information about another agency that may be able to assist
- *Provide information on disability issues
- *Support people to advocate for themselves

GdA Office Locations

- ❖ Ararat
- ❖ Daylesford
- ❖ Ballarat
- ❖ Clunes

By appointment
Horsham, Moorabool,
Golden Plains Shire

Central Intake 1800 552 272

admin@grampiansadvocacy.org.au
<https://grampiansadvocacy.org.au>

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