

Revision of the National Standards for Disability Services

Discussion Paper

April 2010



About this document

This document is part of a consultation package of instructions, discussion guides and qualitative and quantitative tools designed by the Disability Studies and Research Centre, University of New South Wales on for the *Disability Policy and Research Working Group* (DPRWG) as part of the revision of the National Standards for Disability Services.



Arts and
Social Sciences



The revision of the National Standards for Disability Services is occurring in the context of the introduction of a *National Quality Framework for Disability Services in Australia*, a key priority strategy of the National Disability Agreement.

The project is a partnership between all jurisdictions, and is led by the Department of Human Services Victoria.

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Overview

This discussion paper provides an overview of the consultation process that will inform the revision of the National Standards for Disability Services.

The National Standards for Disability Services are being revised to improve and measure outcomes for service users, modernise language and concepts, address gaps and better reflect contemporary organisational practice.

The revision is being undertaken by Australian, State and Territory governments as part of the development of National Quality Framework for Disability Services in Australia (NQF), a key priority in the National Disability Agreement (NDA).

A consultation process with a variety of stakeholders, including service users, providers and planners, will play an important role in informing the revision. The consultations will be occurring in all Australian states and territories between April and June 2010, and will aim to understand the experiences and opinions of people developing, shaping, providing and receiving disability services.

All jurisdictions are working together to plan and implement consultation. Where possible, the Australian government and state and territory governments will consult jointly.

There will be a number of options for participation although consultation methods will differ by state and territory. These include:

- an online survey;
- focus group or workshop;
- telephone interview; and/or
- written submission.

All four consultation methods are comparable and seek to understand a range of stakeholders' experiences, perceptions and reflections on the National Standards for Disability Services. This discussion paper explains the process and content of the revision and consultation in more detail, highlights some example questions and contains contact details for further inquiries or more information.

Background

What are the National Standards for Disability Services?

The National Standards for Disability Services comprise statements in eight areas relevant to disability service delivery. These Standards aim to guide practices in service provision to ensure quality in the delivery of all disability services provided under the *National Disability Agreement*.

The National Standards for Disability Services relate to the following key areas:

Service access
Individual needs
Decision-making and choice
Privacy, dignity and confidentiality
Participation and integration
Valued status
Complaints and disputes
Service management

A copy of the National Standards for Disability Services can be found at Appendix 1 on page 12 of this document. The full text of the standards, including the Supporting Standards, can be found at <http://www.facs.gov.au/sa/disability/standards/Documents/nsds1993.pdf>.

All jurisdictions are working together to plan and implement consultation. Where possible, the Australian government will consult jointly with each state and territory to avoid duplication of consultation with stakeholders who access both state and commonwealth services, for example, accommodation support and employment.

Why does Australia have National Standards for Disability Services?

The National Standards for Disability Services have a primary focus of ensuring results for consumers that are consistent with the Principles and Objectives of Commonwealth and State/Territory legislation. The National Standards for Disability Services aim to ensure that the philosophy of social justice embodied in the Principles and Objectives are extended to all consumers of Commonwealth and State/Territory funded disability services.

Why are the National Standards for Disability Services being revised?

The National Standards for Disability Services are under revision as they have not been updated since their original development in 1992 and implementation in 1993. In September 2009, Disability Services Ministers endorsed a revision of the National Standards for Disability Services as part of the development of a National Quality Framework for Disability Services in Australia.

A revision of the National Standards for Disability Services will not lead to the removal or reduction of existing jurisdictional standards, quality management processes or safeguards for people with a disability. Jurisdictions will undertake work to ensure that local disability service standards align with and map back to the National Standards for Disability Services. Where gaps are identified, jurisdictions will work to address these gaps.

How does the National Quality Framework provide a context for the revision of the National Standards for Disability Services?

In September 2009, Disability Services Ministers endorsed an interim National Quality Framework for Disability Services in Australia (National Quality Framework). The aim of a National Quality Framework is to create a nationally consistent approach to improving the quality of disability services, with a focus on improving outcomes for service users.

The interim National Quality Framework provides the context for implementing and assessing the National Standards for Disability Services. It includes sections on vision and objectives, principles of human rights, outcomes of the National Disability Agreement, legislation, quality management principles, and processes to continuously improve services. In order to ensure that the National Standards for Disability Services are critically appraised and improved in a timely manner, the National Quality Framework also covers governance, change management and monitoring.

The interim National Quality Framework builds on the extensive work that jurisdictions have already undertaken to continuously improve services and supports to people with a disability. The National Quality Framework outlines agreed common core features of quality management systems theory which all jurisdictions quality frameworks must map on to and align with.

The interim National Quality Framework is a transitional and temporary arrangement. It is intended to build the capacity to incorporate the outcomes of future work with what already exists. A final version of the National Quality Framework will be prepared for full validation once the revision of the National Standards for Disability Services is completed.

The interim National Quality Framework may be found at http://www.dhs.vic.gov.au/disability/improving_supports/national-quality-framework

The revision of the National Standards for Disability Services

What does the revision of the National Standards for Disability Services aim to do?

The revision aims to address gaps in the current National Standards for Disability Services and to reflect contemporary philosophies, policies, practices and language. More specifically, the revision aims to improve the National Standards for Disability Services in relation to four areas:

1. **Outcomes for service users**: The revised National Standards for Disability Services should have a greater capacity to provide and measure real and meaningful outcomes for service users – both people with disabilities and their families and carers.
2. **Modernise language and concepts**: The revised National Standards for Disability Services should reflect contemporary language, concepts and philosophies in relation to both disability and international quality management practice.
3. **Address gaps identified by states and territories**: The states and territories around Australia have identified gaps in the National Standards for Disability Services and undertaken significant work within their own jurisdictions to build on and strengthen the National Standards for Disability Services in jurisdiction service standards. The revised National Standards for Disability Services should address these gaps and create a consistent set of National Standards for Disability Services for all jurisdictions in Australia.
4. **Reflect contemporary organisational practice**: The revised National Standards for Disability Services need to be based on consideration of whether generic standards relating to contemporary organisational practice would ease the regulatory burden of the National Standards for Disability Services.

The consultation will assist to improve the National Standards for Disability Services in these four ways by ensuring that changes are informed by the views of those experiencing disability services.

It is acknowledged that non-government or community service organisations have a number of compliance or regulatory requirements associated with funding and the quality management of services.

The revision of the National Standards for Disability Services will include exploring opportunities to introduce, where appropriate, common quality requirements. It is important, however, to ensure that the National Standards for Disability Services retain the distinguishing features that foster a culture of continuous improvement,

and emphasise systems, processes and practices that support outcomes for people with a disability and their family members and carers.

Concurrent to the revision of the National Standards for Disability Services, jurisdictions will continue to undertake work to streamline regulatory burden across the health and community sectors.

How will the revision process work and who is conducting it?

The revision of the National Standards for Disability Services is being managed by the National Quality Framework Working Group (NQF Working Group) The NQF Working Group is a sub-group of the Disability Policy and Research Working Group (DPRWG), the working party to the Community and Disability Services Ministers' Advisory Council. The NQF Working Group includes representatives from all state, territory and Australian government disability agencies.

As part of the revision, the NQF Working Group is undertaking a consultation process with disability service users, family members and carers, service providers and organisations and individuals involved in the disability service sector in all states and territories throughout Australia. This consultation will seek the opinions of a range of stakeholders with direct experience of the National Standards for Disability Services.

The resources for the consultation process have been designed by the Disability Studies and Research Centre, an independent research body based at the University of New South Wales (UNSW), Sydney, in conjunction with the School of Social Sciences and International Studies, UNSW, and Self Advocacy Sydney. These resources will be administered by disability agencies across the state and territory jurisdictions in Australia.

The information resulting from the consultation will be used to inform recommendations about revised National Standards for Disability Services for Disability Services Ministers to consider later this year.

The consultation process

Who should provide input into the consultation process?

The consultation process aims to gain input from all stakeholders involved in disability services. There are three main groups of stakeholders to be included in the consultation:

1. Service users, including:
 - People with disability who use services provided under the NDA and require support to participate in the consultation.

- People with a disability who use services provided under the NDA who can participate independently in the consultation.
 - Family members and carers of people who use services provided under the NDA.
2. Service providers, including:
- Providers from NGOs, CSOs and government funded organisations.
 - Providers from a range of service types, sizes and settings.
 - Providers from direct service roles, middle management and senior management levels.
3. Disability industry and services sector:
- Policy-makers and key governance groups, including the NQF Working group, DPRWG, and all lead and key government disability agencies and their ministers.
 - Peak disability industry organisations.
 - Disability advocacy organisations.
 - Other interested parties, such as educational institutions
 - Training organisations, auditors

Why should I be involved in the consultation?

Participating in the consultation is an excellent opportunity to provide feedback to the government on the National Standards for Disability Services. The table below highlights the benefits

<i>I am a...</i>	<i>Why I should contribute to the consultations?</i>
person with a disability	An opportunity to tell the Government about what influence you think the National Standards for Disability Services should have upon your life and the services you use.
carer/family member	An opportunity to tell the Government about what influence you think the National Standards for Disability Services should have upon the lives of family members and carers, and your family member’s services.
service provider	An opportunity to tell the Government about what influence you think the National Standards for Disability Services should have upon how the services and supports you provide are shaped and continuously improved.
representative from an advocacy organisation or a peak body	An opportunity to tell the Government about what influence you think the National Standards for Disability Services should have upon the groups you represent and how they can be improved to better meet their needs.

When and how will the consultation take place?

The consultation period will be from April to June 2010. Each state and territory jurisdiction will implement strategies to contact service users, providers and developers/planners to invite their participation in the online survey, telephone interviews and focus groups/workshops.

Individuals and organisations can also participate by visiting the National Quality Framework project website at:

http://www.dhs.vic.gov.au/disability/improving_supports/national-quality-framework

What methods are being included in the consultation?

Each state and territory will have up to four options for stakeholders to participate in the consultation process:

1. An online survey: All stakeholders have the option of filling in an online survey. The survey aims to capture individual perceptions and reflections on the National Standards for Disability Services. The link for the online survey will be made available at http://www.dhs.vic.gov.au/disability/improving_supports/national-quality-framework. The questions will be tailored to each individual's experiences – whether they are a service user, family member or carer or involved in service planning, developing or delivering. There is an Easy English version of the survey if required. The survey is anonymous and should take approximately 15 minutes to complete.
2. A focus group or workshop: States and territories will be conducting some focus groups or workshops as part of the consultation process. This will involve being part of a facilitated group discussion about the National Standards for Disability Services. The focus groups or workshops will be targeted towards specific groups of people who will be invited to take part. Involvement in a focus group or workshop should not take more than one and a half hours.
3. A telephone interview: Some states and territories will accept telephone feedback as part of their consultation process. This will allow people to give their views of the National Standards for Disability Services. A telephone interview should take between 30 and 45 minutes.
4. Written submissions: All stakeholders have the option of completing a written submission. This method is particularly recommended for disability service organisations who wish to provide an organisational response to the consultation process. Written submissions should be completed and submitted online by filling out the form found at http://www.dhs.vic.gov.au/disability/improving_supports/national-quality-framework

Not all consultation methods will be available in all states and territories. The range of options is designed to enable as many people as possible to participate in the consultation process.

Which consultation method is best for me?

The table below provide suggestions as to which groups of people might wish to undertake the different consultation methods.

Method	Target Audience
Online survey	Individuals : <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ People with a disability who do and do not require support ○ Family members and carers of people with disability ○ Advocates ○ Others involved in the development and delivery of services, such as direct support staff, policy makers, government agency personnel
Focus groups/ workshop	Key groups known to be important within each jurisdiction: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ People with different types of disability ○ People with disability from particular groups – Indigenous, culturally and linguistically diverse, regional, rural and remote areas ○ Family members and carers
Telephone Interview	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ People with a disability who seek to comment via the telephone. Should not be used for people with communication difficulties. ○ Family members and carers of people with disability ○ Service providers ○ Advocates
Written submission	Group responses: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Professional bodies / networks ○ Peak disability organisations ○ Advocacy agencies and groups ○ Government departments and agencies Other interested parties, such as educational institutions, training organisations, auditors, groups of parents

What do the consultation methods aim to find out?

The consultation methods ask all stakeholder groups about eight main themes:

1. Demographic background: Demographic information will be collected about individuals and organisations to help determine whether demographic differences impact on people's experiences, perceptions and reflections of the National Standards for Disability Services. All information will remain confidential.
2. Knowledge of the National Standards for Disability Services: This section will capture stakeholders' knowledge about the context and content of the National Standards for Disability Services. It will also seek to understand how the National Standards for Disability Services are used.
3. Ideas and issues in the National Standards for Disability Services: The aim of this section is to understand to what extent the National Standards for Disability Services cover issues that are important for each stakeholder group and to identify missing concepts. It will also ascertain whether any of the National Standards for Disability Services are unnecessary or outdated.
4. Purpose of the National Standards for Disability Services: Questions will be asked to determine what stakeholders believe to be the purpose or intent of the National Standards for Disability Services.
5. Words/language in the National Standards for Disability Services: Questions will be asked about how stakeholders relate to and interpret the language in the National Standards for Disability Services. This section will also explore the extent to which Standards are meaningful (that is, appropriate and relevant) to stakeholders.
6. Using the National Standards for Disability Services in practice: This section will examine how relevant and meaningful the National Standards for Disability Services are to stakeholders in relation to their everyday experiences in providing and receiving services. This will also include how the National Standards for Disability Services relate to the philosophies and values of individuals and organisations.
7. Reviewing the National Standards for Disability Services: It is important to understand how accessible, visible, flexible and useable the National Standards for Disability Services are. This section will cover these issues, but also other practical issues.
8. Feedback on and assessment against the National Standards for Disability Services: If the National Standards for Disability Services aim to improve service quality and service outcomes, it may be important to measure these outcomes. This section asks questions about measuring the National Standards for Disability

Services. For example, what needs to be considered if service provider performance is measured against the National Standards for Disability Services? What indicators are appropriate, what methods could be used for effective monitoring and feedback?

9. Overall effectiveness of the National Standards for Disability Services: The consultations will also try to establish the overall effectiveness of the National Standards for Disability Services by examining stakeholders' perceptions of which aspects of the National Standards for Disability Services do and do not work well.

All stakeholders who take part in the consultations will also be given the opportunity to identify other relevant issues and provide additional comments about the current or revised National Standards for Disability Services.

What are the implications of being involved in the consultation?

Being involved in the consultation means that you have a say in how the National Standards for Disability Services are revised, and how the quality of services to people with a disability should be continuously improved. The consultation allows Australian, State and Territory governments to hear the views of the people providing and receiving disability services. Being involved in the consultation means that you can help make disability services better.

Each participant has the option of their personal information remaining confidential throughout and after the consultation process, thus ensuring the privacy and protection of individuals, families and organisations.

Examples of questions

Depending on the participation format different types of questions will be asked.

In the interviews and focus groups most questions are open-ended. This means that participants answer in their own words. An example of an open-ended question is:

“In what ways would you like to see the National Standards for Disability Services changed?”

The focus group facilitator or interviewer may ask follow up questions or ask for elaboration.

In the online survey, most questions are close-ended. This means choosing an answer from those provided. An example of a close-ended question is:

<i>How would you rate your knowledge of the content of the National Standards for Disability Services?</i>	Excellent <input type="checkbox"/>	Good <input type="checkbox"/>	Fair <input type="checkbox"/>	Poor <input type="checkbox"/>	None <input type="checkbox"/>
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The written submission will pose a range of open-ended questions and themes in a written format. This can be completed online.

Further inquiries

For further inquiries, please contact the appropriate person for your state or territory, as listed below:

Australian Capital Territory

Narelle Hill
narelle.hill@act.gov.au
(02) 6205 1566

New South Wales

Sonia Davda
Sonia.Davda@dadhc.nsw.gov.au
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Northern Territory

Robyn Westerman
Robyn.Westerman@nt.gov.au
(08) 8999 2407

Queensland

Peta Mackay
peta.mackay@communities.qld.gov.au
(07) 3836 0531

South Australia

Mary Bice
Mary.Bice@dfc.sa.gov.au
(08) 8226 7056

Tasmania

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Ingrid.Ganley@dhhs.tas.gov.au
(03) 6233 4054

Victoria

Brendon Butler
Brendon.Butler@dhs.vic.gov.au
(03) 9096 8436

Western Australia

Michael Bosley-Smith
Michael.Bosley-smith@dsc.wa.gov.au
(08) 9426-9344

Australian Federal Government – employment or advocacy services

Anthony Bartolo
Anthony.bartolo@fahcsia.gov.au
(07) 3004 4601

Appendix 1: National Standards for Disability Services

Standard 1: Service access

Each consumer seeking a service has access to a service on the basis of relative need and available resources.

Standard 2: Individual needs

Each person with a disability receives a service which is designed to meet, in the least restrictive way, his or her individual needs and personal goals.

Standard 3: Decision making and choice

Each person with a disability has the opportunity to participate as fully as possible in making decisions about the events and activities of his or her daily life in relation to the services he or she receives.

Standard 4: Privacy, dignity and confidentiality

Each consumer's right to privacy, dignity and confidentiality in all aspects of his or her life is recognised and respected.

Standard 5: Participation and integration

Each person with a disability is supported and encouraged to participate and be involved in the life of the community.

Standard 6: Valued status

Each person with a disability has the opportunity to develop and maintain skills and to participate in activities that enable him or her to achieve valued roles in the community.

Standard 7: Complaints and disputes

Each consumer is free to raise and have resolved any complaints or disputes he or she may have regarding the agency or the service.

Standard 8: Service management

Each agency adopts sound management practices which maximise outcomes for consumers.