



Proceedings from the National Disability Research Partnership (NDRP) Evidence to Action Event: *Mobilising disability research and evidence for policy impact*, July 2025

Acknowledgement of Country

“I would like to begin by acknowledging the Traditional Owners of the lands on which we are meeting today. We honour and respect all First Nations people and Elders. I also want to show my respect to all First Nations people joining us and recognise the important contributions they make to our communities and to our work together in the disability sector.” – Clare Gibellini, Board Chair, NDRP

Introduction

About the National Disability Research Partnership

The National Disability Research Partnership is an independent organisation. Our Board, committees and staff, are majority people with disability. We work in partnership with people with disability and their organisations, researchers, advocates and government. We are not part of the government. We are an independent not for profit organisation. Our role is to support strong, inclusive research that can drive real change in policy and practice.

Mobilising evidence for action

One of our key strategic objectives is to mobilise evidence for action. Mobilising evidence for action means quality research is used to inform real world changes that help people with disability. This means making sure findings from research are used to improve policy, practice and programs.

One of our initiatives is to hold ‘evidence to action’ events. In these events we host discussions about a certain topic related to the [NDRP Research Agenda](#). This includes what we know from the research, what we don’t know, and what further research is needed. The goal of these events is to work together and inform future research and policy directions.

This document

This document has:

- overview of key themes discussed at our third event held on July 24, 2025,
- points from each provocation speaker including quotes,
- attendee numbers and feedback,
- case study main messages,
- resources, supports, and thanks.



About the event

This event brought together people with disability, advocates, policymakers, researchers, and leaders from the sector. There were short talks and group discussions. It built on ideas from earlier events and showed NDRP's focus on research led by people with disability, based on real experiences, and aimed at making a difference in policy and practice.

The Hon. Jenny McAllister, Minister for the NDIS, spoke about the Australian Government's promise to support research that helps keep people with disability safe, respected, and included.

Quote: "Research that demonstrates what would work to deliver culturally safe services and supports in remote areas would help me think about how I could work with the NDIA, my department and state and territory colleagues to scale those ideas more broadly." - Senator the Hon Jenny McAllister, Minister for the National Disability Insurance Scheme

Three speakers, Jane Spring AM, (Chair, Australia's Disability Strategy Advisory Council), Professor Sally Robinson, (NDRP Research Committee member), and Natalie Wade, (Associate Commissioner, NDIS Quality and Safeguards Commission), shared their views to inspire new ways of thinking.

All the ideas and suggestions from this event will help shape future resources, advice, and funding, making sure that research led by and for people with disability is supported, valued, and put into action.

About the provocations

Provocation means doing or saying something that causes a reaction, often by making people think, question, or feel strongly about an issue. In the context of this event, a provocation was to spark conversation or challenge people to see things in a new way. Our three speakers encouraged everyone to question the past and think about how systems, funding, and working together might need to change.

Jane Spring AM

- Governments say they want evidence-based policy, but decisions are frequently influenced by narrative, urgency, budget cycles, and politics.
- Inclusion isn't just a value, it's a method. People with lived experience should be engaged as co-designers and co-evaluators, not just participants.
- Research priorities should be shaped by the questions and barriers that people with disability want to address.
- People with disability should be in leadership roles that set research frameworks and priorities.

Quote: "When you include people with disability at the start you don't just get more inclusion; you actually get better questions. You get research that's grounded in everyday experience and not just academic curiosity." - Jane Spring AM



Sally Robinson

- Inclusive research methods are essential for capturing the true experiences and needs of people with disability.
- There is a need for career development opportunities for people with disability in research.
- Co-produced research is often not seen as rigorous as compared to other methods, but it is crucial for real-world relevance.
- Community research positions are vital for bridging the gap between academic research and the lived experiences of people with disability.

Quote: "I think fundamentally our expectations are far too low about people and what people contribute to research. People know a lot about their lives, however they communicate. We tend to expect that people who don't use their voice, their spoken voice to communicate don't have a lot to say about their lives but people have an enormous amount to tell us about what they want to happen in their lives and they have a lot of ideas about what they want to be different in their lives." Sally Robinson

Natalie Wade

- Evidence-based research recommendations should be presented in a way that acknowledges and works within the realities of government portfolios and authorising environments.
- Research should consider how findings impact on different stakeholder issues and how reform needs to occur across within and across systems.
- Research should account for the different timings of issues and ensure that findings remain relevant over time.
- Evidence-based research should allow for flexible implementation to meet the diverse needs of different populations.

Quote: "Often evidence-based research and thinking can skip on being holistic. Often it can be very specialised and very expert, which is very important. But it's not always presented in a way where it is clear for policymakers and lawmakers to be able to balance different stakeholder issues, to cohesively agree across many different intersecting issues that may be embroiled, or how it will be funded across the whole." Natalie Wade

Throughout Part 1, speakers explored what it really takes to move from good research to real change. The clear message? Disability research must be led by lived experience, built in partnership, and used to shift systems, not just produce reports.



Attendees

Event registrations

- 23% of registrants identified as living with a disability
- 14% identified as a carer, family or kinship group member of a person with disability
- 26% identified as a disability advocate
- 41% identified as a researcher
- 21% identified as being in a government or regulator role
- 13% identified as a service provider

Event engagement

- Attended: Part 1 (253 attendees) and Part 2 (88 attendees)
- Feedback: 20% of attendees responded to the survey (50 out of 253)

Event and presentations ratings

The event received overwhelmingly positive feedback with 86% rated the event as Excellent or Very Good and 65% gave the presentations and discussions a 5/5 rating; 27% gave 4/5.

Breakout room discussions: Mobilising disability research and evidence for policy impact

In Part 2 of the event, people joined small breakout rooms to explore a fictional case study, based on real-world issues. The case study was about a research project focused on improving employment outcomes for young people with disability. Each group used the same story to spark discussion on what helps research lead to action. A made-up example was used so everyone could discuss real challenges.

The case study project featured strong co-design between researchers, young people, advocacy organisations, and government partners. It highlighted barriers such as disconnected systems, low expectations in schools, and a lack of clear pathways from education to employment. Despite producing practical, accessible outputs, the research stalled when the government department backing it restructured and shifted focus.

People reflected on what enabled inclusive research, what blocked impact, and what advice they would give to researchers, policymakers, and advocacy organisations. The session underscored the need for early partnerships, sustained support, and shared responsibility to ensure disability research leads to lasting change. Table 1 brings together key messages from NDRP's two Evidence to Action events in May and July 2025. It shows what people told us helps and hinders the use of disability research in policy and practice and what needs to change.



Table 1: What we've heard about knowledge mobilisation

What works	What gets in the way	What we're learning
<p>Start together, not just end together: Research has the greatest impact when people with disability, policymakers, and researchers are involved from the beginning, not just consulted at the end.</p>	<p>Fast-moving policy cycles vs. slow research timelines: Decision-makers often need answers quickly, while research processes can take time.</p>	<p>Real partnership is a way of working, not a one-time meeting: Embedding collaboration between policymakers, researchers, and people with disability from day one is essential.</p>
<p>Shared purpose and strong relationships: Long-term connections between researchers, policy teams, and community advocates create the trust and understanding needed to use evidence effectively.</p>	<p>Rigid systems: Procurement, funding, and ethics processes can prevent meaningful co-design and shared decision-making.</p>	<p>Mobilising evidence means shaping research together: It's not just about sharing findings, it's about designing research that's ready to be used.</p>
<p>Clarity, accessibility, and timing: Research that is clear, timely, and speaks directly to the real questions people and governments are asking is more likely to shape decisions.</p>	<p>Tokenism and missed follow-through: Involving people with disability without real influence or follow-up undermines trust and impact.</p>	<p>Advice for researchers: work with policy, not just about it: Understand policy contexts, timelines, and the formats decision-makers use. Build in co-design with government and community.</p>
<p>Disability-led design: Research is more relevant, inclusive, and powerful when people with disability help shape the priorities, methods, and findings.</p>	<p>Invisible or excluded voices: When research overlooks lived experience, especially at intersections, it fails to reflect reality.</p>	<p>Advice for policymakers is listen to different kinds of knowledge: Recognise the value of lived experience alongside data. Create space for disability-led research in strategy, program design, and reviews.</p>
	<p>Barriers to access and understanding: Jargon, academic formats, and paywalls make research hard to use for many.</p>	<p>Change is possible when we bridge lived experience and system design: When people with disability and policy leaders shape research together, we get better questions, clearer answers, and more equitable outcomes.</p>



Supports

While this event focused on why research needs to matter, we acknowledge that some of the content may have been challenging. Discussions included personal experiences, systemic barriers, and the impact of exclusionary policies and practices. If you feel upset or need support, [click here for services that can help](#).

Feedback

We invite feedback on all aspects of our work. Please [access the event feedback survey here](#).

Acknowledgments and thanks

The NDRP would like to extend our heartfelt thanks to our collaborators, all speakers, breakout room facilitators, our access and inclusion partners, and attendees who made this event a success.

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www.ndrp.org.au [Evidence to Action page](#)

[YouTube playlist](#)