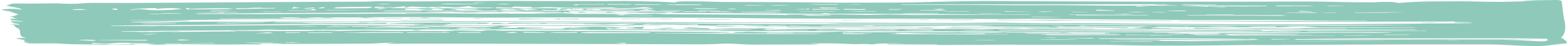
August 2024

Submission in response to Australia’s Disability Strategy Review



Our Watch

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# Acknowledgement of Country

Our Watch acknowledges the Traditional Owners of the land across Australia on which we work and live. We pay respects to Elders past and present and recognise the continuing connection Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have to land, culture, knowledge and language for over 65,000 years.

As a non-Indigenous organisation, Our Watch understands that violence against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and children is not an ‘Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander problem.’ As highlighted in Our Watch’s national resource *Changing the picture*, there is an intersection between racism, sexism and violence against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women.

Our Watch has an ongoing commitment to the prevention of violence against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and children, who continue to experience violence at a significantly higher rate than non-Indigenous women. We acknowledge all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who continue to lead the work of sharing knowledge with non-Aboriginal people and relentlessly advocate for an equitable, violence-free future in Australia.

# About Our Watch

[Our Watch](https://www.ourwatch.org.au/) is a national leader in the primary prevention of violence against women and their children in Australia. We are an independent, not for profit organisation established by the Commonwealth and Victorian Governments in 2013. All Australian governments are members of Our Watch.

Our vision is an Australia where women and their children live free from all forms of violence. We aim to drive nation-wide change in the culture, behaviours, attitudes, systems and social structures that drive violence against women. Guided by our ground-breaking national frameworks, [*Change the story*](https://www.ourwatch.org.au/resource/change-the-story-a-shared-framework-for-the-primary-prevention-of-violence-against-women-in-australia) *(2nd ed 2021)[[1]](#endnote-2), Changing the picture (2018)[[2]](#endnote-3) and Changing the landscape (2022)*,[[3]](#endnote-4) we work at all levels of our society to address the deeply entrenched, underlying drivers of violence against women. We work with governments, practitioners and the community, at all levels of Australian society, to address these drivers of violence in all settings where people live, learn, work, and socialise.

# Changing the landscape

Published in 2022, [*Changing the landscape: A national resource to prevent violence against women and girls with disabilities*](https://assets.ourwatch.org.au/assets/Key-frameworks/Changing-the-landscape-AA.pdf) is a national, evidence-based resource to guide the prevention of violence against women and girls with disabilities.

Essential actions:
Action 1.
Address the underlying social context
that gives rise to violence against
women and girls with disabilities.
Action 2.
Challenge the acceptance and
normalisation of violence against
women and girls with disabilities.
Action 3.
Improve attitudes towards women and
girls with disabilities by challenging
ableist and sexist stereotypes.
Action 4.
Promote the inclusion of women and
girls with disabilities in all aspects of life.
Action 5.
Promote women and girls with disabilities’
independence, agency and participation
in leadership and decision-making.
Action 6.
Engage men and boys to challenge
controlling, dominant and aggressive forms
of masculinity.
*Changing the landscape* identifies ableism and sexism as the drivers of violence against women and girls with disabilities and outlines the six essential actions to address these drivers.

*Changing the landscape* was developed, researched and drafted in partnership between Our Watch and Women with Disabilities Victoria. The resource development was informed by national stakeholder consultations across all states and territories and 39 experts in disability, gender equality and violence against women. It was also guided by two Project Advisory Groups which included policy and practice experts, and activists and consultants with lived experience of disability.

# Framework for action

In 2024, Our Watch and Women with Disabilities Victoria published a [*Framework for action to prevent violence against women and girls with disabilities*](https://www.ourwatch.org.au/submissions/framework-for-action-women-girls-disability). The *Framework for action* is a resource developed for governments and policymakers to translate the essential actions in *Changing the landscape* into tangible proposed actions.

The *Framework for action* was developed in consultation with Commonwealth and state and territory governments, disabled peoples’ organisations and the primary prevention sector. It was also informed by a Project Advisory Group which included representatives from across every jurisdiction who had lived experience of disability and/or gender-based violence.

The *Framework for action* recognises the commitment by all governments to prevent violence against women and girls with disabilities under the *National Plan to End Violence against Women and Children 2022-2032* and *Australia’s Disability Strategy 2021-2031*. It identifies a set of short, medium, and long term proposed actions across policy, legislative and institutional reform, as well as priority settings, communities, and partnerships.

# Executive summary

Our Watch welcomes the opportunity to provide a submission to Australia’s Disability Strategy Review.

The review of Australia’s Disability Strategy presents an opportunity to consider the specific experiences of women and girls with disabilities and develop dedicated actions to prevent violence against women and girls with disabilities before it starts. Committing to this approach, alongside the application of a 'disability lens' to the implementation of the First Action Plan under the National Plan to End Violence Against Women and Children, as outlined in the Australian Government's response to the Disability Royal Commission (DRC), will achieve a more comprehensive approach to the safety of women and girls with disabilities. It is critical, given the scale of the issue of violence against women and girls with disabilities, that safety is elevated as a priority within the ADS.

This submission provides a set of recommended actions under each of the proposed Targeted Action Plans (TAPs) and opportunities for the Outcome Areas and Policy Priorities to align to evidence based approaches to preventing violence against women and girls with disabilities.

The review, in the context of the recent response of Commonwealth and state and territory governments to the Disability Royal Commission Final Report, provides an opportunity to ensure and recommit to strong government leadership and coordination in preventing and responding to violence against women and girls with disabilities.

In making this submission, Our Watch emphasises the importance of engaging appropriately with the diversity of people and organisations which represent people with disabilities, people with lived experience of gendered violence and other forms of structural oppression and discrimination.

**Contact**

We would welcome the opportunity to discuss any aspects of this submission or to provide further, more detailed advice over the course of the review.

Please contact Amanda Alford, Director of Government Relations, Policy and Evidence, at amanda.alford@ourwatch.org.au to discuss.

# About this submission

In line with Our Watch’s primary prevention expertise and evidence-based frameworks, this submission will address the *draft findings and recommendations* and *outcome areas* outlined in the [Discussion Paper](https://engage.dss.gov.au/wp-content/uploads/2024/08/ads-review-discussion-paper-august-2024-pdf.pdf).

This submission is informed by *Changing the landscape* and the *Framework for action*. The proposed actions in the *Framework for action* have been drafted for all governments. However, the Commonwealth and state and territory governments have all received a tailored version of the *Framework for action* which identifies specific legislation, policies and organisations relevant to their jurisdiction. In the development of jurisdictional actions under each draft finding and recommendation, Our Watch encourages governments refer to the tailored jurisdictional actions that were provided to the Department of Social Services, Ending Gender Based-Violence Group and state and territory Our Watch member representatives.

Many of Our Watch’s proposed actions also align to recommendations from the DRC, some of which have been accepted in principle but many of which have been noted or are subject to further consideration. Our Watch’s inclusion of these actions is to reinforce their importance in relation to the prevention of violence against women and girls with disabilities and in the hope that their status is re-considered as part of informing future ADS priorities.

# Feedback on draft findings and recommendations

## Draft Finding 1: More needs to be done to support a coordinated approach to the ADS implementation across governments.

* **Draft Recommendation: Refine ADS mechanisms to support a nationally coordinated approach to implementing ADS.**

Our Watch supports the recommendation to refine mechanisms for a nationally coordinated approach to implementing the ADS.

As signatories to ADS, the Commonwealth Government, state and territory governments and the Australian Local Government Association, all play a critical leadership role in addressing inequalities across Australian society and creating an enabling environment for systemic, structural, and large-scale change. Given the complexity of the ADS and its implementation, effective local, state and national coordination is important in order to ensure long-term success and sustained change.

*Change the story* identifies coordination, collaboration and quality assurance mechanisms as an essential foundation for a national approach to preventing violence against women.[[4]](#endnote-5) Mechanisms are needed to enable coordination and collaboration across jurisdictions, sectors and settings, and to promote consistency between legislative and policy reforms, programs, communications campaigns.[[5]](#endnote-6) This requires the deliberate development of, and investment in, quality standards, governance mechanisms to support coordination, and advisory bodies.

When refining the new mechanisms, Our Watch encourages integrating the following actions to support a nationally coordinated approach to the ADS:

* Adopt a whole of government approach by ensuring commitment across government portfolios with centralised coordination and clear allocation of departmental responsibility for each action.
* Establishing and committing to mechanisms for coordination across all levels of government.
* Strengthen effective governance mechanisms to support accountability, quality and impact over time at all levels of government including across multiple departments and jurisdictions.
* Develop a communications plan to ensure consistent and evidence-based messaging, reduce duplication and ensure messaging includes appropriate referral pathways.
* Alignment with other key strategies and plans including the National Plan to End Violence against Women and Children 2022-2032.
* Strengthen monitoring, accountability, and quality assurance frameworks at each level of government.

## Draft Finding 2: There is strong support for new Targeted Action Plans.

* **Draft Recommendation: Consider developing new TAPs on:**
* **Inclusive Homes and Communities**
* **Safety, Rights and Justice**
* **Community Attitudes.**

Our Watch strongly supports the development of new TAPs for each of the identified areas and encourages the inclusion of dedicated actions related to the primary prevention of violence against women and girls with disabilities. Actions should contribute to building a social context in which people with disabilities, particularly women and girls, are safe, included, and respected, and where violence in all its forms—whether everyday ableism or more systemic forms of violence—is no longer condoned.

**Inclusive Homes and Communities**

Our Watch recommends the Commonwealth and state and territory governments to make commitments under any Inclusive Homes and Communities TAP to:

* Increase the availability of non-segregated, accessible, and safe accommodation for women and girls with disabilities.

**Safety, Rights and Justice**

Our Watch recommends the Commonwealth and state and territory governments to make commitments under any Safety, Right and Justice TAP to:

Safety

* Fund or develop research and projects that build an understanding about the links between masculinities and men’s use of violence against women and girls with disabilities in various settings, especially in segregated and secluded settings.
* Support and promote initiatives that address men’s use of coercive control in relationships and the normalisation of male dominance in relationships, with particular attention to the overlapping impacts of ableism and the power dynamics in intimate and care relationships.
* Examine current primary prevention initiatives that engage with men to address harmful forms of masculinity and support opportunities to address ableism within those existing initiatives.

Rights

* Continue to support Equal Opportunity, Human Rights and Anti-Discrimination and Disability Commissions to protect and promote the rights of women and girls with disabilities through their educative, complaint and advisory functions.
* Continue to fund disability advocacy pathways including by providing long-term resourcing for disability peaks, disability support services and organisations led by and for women and girls with disabilities.

Justice

* Resource Legal Aid Commissions, Community Legal Centres, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Legal Services and Family Violence Prevention Legal Services to ensure greater access to women and girls with disabilities requiring legal assistance.
* Increase access to justice for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people with disabilities.
* Ensure reforms to laws such as consent laws and coercive control are accompanied by community education, training and capacity building and workforce development for both people with disabilities and disability practitioners.

**Community Attitudes**

Our Watch recommends the Commonwealth and state and territory governments to make commitments under any Community Attitudes TAP to:

Eliminating discrimination

* Support initiatives that improve media reporting about violence against women and girls with disabilities, including by conveying its prevalence and eliminating stereotypes that condone ableism.
* Resource the design, implementation and evaluation of evidence-based programs that promote supported decision-making and align with the supported decision-making principles outlined in the DRC.
* Take proactive measures to end the institutionalisation of people with disabilities by phasing out the practice of disability-based segregation in mainstream settings, including education, housing, health care and employment.
* Reform policies and practices that legitimise reproductive coercion such as forced sterilisation, contraception, or abortion, in line with DRC Recommendation 6.41 and embed to move towards supported decision making in line with DRC Recommendation 6.6.
* Review and reform guardianship and administration legislation in line with DRC Recommendation 6.6.
* Review anti-discrimination legislation to introduce a positive duty to eliminate disability discrimination, harassment, and victimisation.
* Resource Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander-led organisations to support and promote the rights of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women with disabilities to individual self-determination, choice and to make decisions about their own lives and relationships.

Promoting authentic representation

* Support and facilitate the equal economic participation of women with disabilities to promote equal access to employment for people with disability including through supporting DRC Recommendation 7.32; to develop a National Inclusive Employment Roadmap to transform Australian Disability Enterprises and end segregated employment by 2034.
* Review anti-discrimination legislation to introduce a positive duty to eliminate disability discrimination, harassment, and victimisation.
* Improve and monitor shifts in community understanding and awareness of violence against women and girls with disabilities by funding or developing evaluated education campaigns and training programs.

Increasing leadership

* Create targets for women with disabilities on government boards, non-government boards and public service employment, including executive and senior leadership positions.
* Fund or deliver leadership, mentoring, scholarship, professional development, or internship programs designed for women with disabilities.
* Improve and monitor shifts in community understanding and awareness of violence against women and girls with disabilities by funding or developing evaluated education campaigns and training programs.

To ensure the effectiveness of the TAPs, Our Watch strongly encourages the development and implementation of foundational actions that help build a strong infrastructure for gender-informed disability work. These foundational actions are essential to ensuring that the TAP actions are supported, impactful and able to be sustained over the long term.

While all governments have a responsibly to developing and implementing these foundational actions, the Commonwealth Government has an important leadership role in establishing, investing in, and supporting these actions.

Drawing from the *Framework for action*, Our Watch encourages the Commonwealth and state and territory governments to make commitments as part of the review to:

* Increase understanding and awareness about primary prevention of violence against women and girls with disabilities within advisory bodies, commissions and ministerial councils.
* Continue to build a strong primary prevention practice evidence base through resourcing primary prevention initiatives and programs that address the gendered and ableist drivers of violence against women and girls with disabilities.
* Ensure that monitoring, evaluation and learning frameworks of disability and domestic and family violence related policies and programs include outcomes, indicators and measures that address the ableist drivers of violence and identify the relevant data sources that will be monitored and reported against.
* Create, resource, monitor professional development opportunities for disability and primary prevention workforces to increase their understanding about the gendered and ableist drivers of violence against women and girls with disabilities.
* Establish mechanisms to collect and report gender and disability disaggregated data about all forms of violence against women and girls with disabilities to inform the development of targeted prevention initiatives. Ensure mechanisms align with the principles of Indigenous Data Sovereignty.

Including foundational actions as part of the review will ensure ADS is aligned to and integrated with key national strategies and plans such as the National Plan to End Violence against Women and Children, the National Agreement on Closing the Gap, the National Housing and Homelessness Plan and that there are strong foundations to support the prevention of violence against women and girls with disabilities.

## Draft Finding 3: Accessible information and communications are vital for safe and inclusive communities

* **Draft Recommendation: Identify ways to support best practice approaches on accessible communications.**

Our Watch strongly supports this recommendation and notes its critical importance to the prevention of violence against women and girls with disabilities.

Accessible communications, such as videos with audio descriptions, captions and Auslan interpreting and resources in Plain English and Easy English, are critical to establishing a social context where women and girls with disabilities are equal, included, respected and live free from violence.

It is particularly important to ensure public information and communications in relation to domestic, family and sexual violence are accessible. This is important given rates of violence can be even higher for people with psychosocial disabilities, intellectual disabilities, or complex communication needs.[[6]](#endnote-7) Public information and communications in relation to domestic, family and sexual violence includes government and non-government services including websites, hotlines, resources, community engagement, case management.

## Draft Finding 4: ADS reporting does not support government accountability, implementation compliance, or recognising intersectional experiences of people with disability.

* **Draft Recommendations:** 
  + **Extend ADS data and reporting to improve visibility of intersectional experiences.**
  + **Embed mechanisms that will support early identification of delayed and undelivered TAPs actions.**

Our Watch supports this recommendation to improve the visibility of intersectional experiences of people with disability. This requires an examination of intersecting structural inequalities and systems of oppression, discrimination, and power, including but not limited to: heteronormativity, homophobia and biphobia; cisnormativity, transphobia; racism and xenophobia; colonialism; ageism; religious discrimination; and classism, poverty and socioeconomic disadvantage.

The ADS review has proposed that disaggregated data collection and reporting through the Outcomes Framework and other ADS reporting is one way to address the draft recommendations. Current APS reporting on the Outcomes Framework via the Australian Institute for Health and Welfare provides data against high-level systems, population and attitudinal data. While there are measures with disaggregated data, this does not provide insight into intersectional experiences. That is, the ways in which a person with disability experiences compounding structural inequality, unequal power relations and discrimination due to other aspects of their identity (e.g., being from a culturally and linguistically diverse background, and/or their sexuality and gender identity).

While disaggregated data is critical, analysis of categories in isolation will not provide sufficient information about intersectional experiences. To achieve this, quantitative data requires analysis and commentary to contextualise and identify patterns and relationships in the data, as well as power dynamics and structural inequalities. Qualitative approaches are well suited to collecting lived experience data, as they provide insight into people’s perspectives, and the nuances, contexts and complexities of experience. Qualitative methods can also capture data that is missing from ADS reporting or be targeted to explore areas of interest identified from reporting data. Our Watch strongly recommends that a Data Analysis Framework is developed to guide the intersectional analysis of ADS reporting data.

Our Watch recommends consideration of the following questions to apply an intersectional lens to ADS reporting data:

* In addition to examining ableism, how will you include other forms of power and inequality in your analysis?
* What issues of inequality or discrimination are being highlighted within the data?
* How can you ensure that you look for, investigate, and include the range of experiences across groups of people in your findings?

Safety from violence, abuse, neglect and exploitation is a priority under the outcome area ‘safety, rights and justice’ under the ADS Outcomes Framework. However, the outcome area of ‘community attitudes’ currently does not include measures that capture data on the four ableist drivers of violence against women with disability. The drivers of violence against women with disability are outlined in *Changing the landscape*, and the supporting *Framework for action*. Ableist drivers include negative stereotypes about people with disabilities; accepting or normalising violence, disrespect and discrimination against people with disabilities; controlling people with disabilities’ decision-making and limiting independence; and social segregation and exclusion of people with disabilities. It is important that data is collected from the wider Australian population to measure progress in reducing ableist attitudes and behaviours concurrently with data about victimisation.

Caution should be applied to the interpretation and reporting of administrative data due its inherent limitations. For example, administrative data only includes people who are engaged in systems and services for people with disability (e.g., NDIS), or who report their disability status to their employer. While employers or may collect data on employees with disability, not all will feel comfortable or safe to disclose this, and as a result will not be represented in employment data. Further, regarding the experiences of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people with disability, advocates and academics have argued that administrative data is often de-contextualised, reductive, stigmatising and harmful. We recommend that consideration be given to engaging Indigenous Data Sovereignty experts to support the application of data sovereignty principles to the collection, analysis, reporting, and governance of data about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander individuals and communities.

In addition to recommendation a, Our Watch also supports recommendation b to embed mechanisms that will support early identification of delayed and undelivered TAPs actions. This can be achieved through process evaluations of the TAPs part way through to ensure they are on track.

## Draft Finding 5: For ADS to achieve its goals, it is critical that people with disability are genuinely involved in the design, implementation and governance of ADS.

* Draft Recommendation: Develop and implement an ADS Community Engagement Plan, in addition to the existing ADS engagement commitments.

Our Watch strongly supports this recommendation and recognises that the best way to ensure commitments outlined in the ADS are relevant and meaningful for people with disabilities is to include them and their representative organisations in the development, delivery and leadership of prevention programs from the outset. This includes planning, design, implementation, evaluation, promotion, communications and governance (e.g., advisory groups and steering committees).

As part of the Engagement Plan, it is critical that engagement efforts reflect and include a group of people with disabilities that is not homogenous and that people most impacted by multiple forms of oppression are represented and engaged. It is also important that people with disabilities are provided with support to engage and be involved in the design, implementation and governance of ADS. This includes ensuring engagements are accessible, inclusive and flexible around the needs of people with disabilities, that suitable debriefing and support services are offered and remuneration for the time and effort spent supporting government activities is provided.

# Outcome Areas and Policy Priorities

To change the social context that gives rise to violence against women and girls with disabilities, a range of actions are required to promote gender and disability equality in all settings and contexts and across all levels of society.

Our Watch agrees with the set of topics identified under Outcome Areas and Policy Priorities and encourages the ADS to develop comprehensive and evidence-based responses to the topics identified. The set of topics have strong alignment with the priorities outlined in *Changing the landscape* and whole-of-society approach needed to prevent violence against women and girls with disabilities.

## Outcome Area: Employment and Financial Security

People with disabilities, especially women, are more likely to be unemployed, live in poverty and be unable to cover their basic expenses.[[7]](#endnote-8) Many women with disabilities have no or minimal opportunities to participate in paid employment during their adult lives, including as a result of sexist and ableist beliefs about the competence and ability of women with disabilities, unequal hiring and promotion standards, unequal access to training, and access requirements not being met, as well as the gender-based discrimination experienced by all women, including women without disabilities.[[8]](#endnote-9) The lack of access to employment has impacts across the lifespan, with average incomes and superannuation levels significantly reduced for women with disabilities.[[9]](#endnote-10)

As a result, it is important that the ADS contribute to facilitating the equal employment and economic of participation of women with disabilities, challenge social norms that limit women’s independence, agency and participation in leadership and implement specific initiatives that enable women and girls with disabilities to exercise their right to decision-making.[[10]](#endnote-11)

## Outcome Area: Safety, rights and justice

Our Watch strongly agrees that disability rights, violence against women and girls with disabilities, and the criminal justice system should be priorities for future work under the ADS. Including this as an Outcome Area is both an appropriate and essential response to the findings of the DRC, especially concerning women and girls with disabilities.

Violence against women and girls with disabilities is a serious violation of human rights. Across every state and territory in Australia, women and girls with disabilities experience violence, abuse and neglect at much higher rates than men with disabilities or people without disabilities.[[11]](#endnote-12)

While a comprehensive and holistic approach to the prevention of violence against women and girls with disabilities should include actions that are multipronged and mutually reinforcing across a range of ADS outcome areas, it is critical that the ADS also include explicit actions to protect women and girls with disabilities from all forms of violence.

Our Watch strongly recommends committing to and implementing the actions outlined under the proposed TAP: Safety, rights and justice, as [noted above](#_Draft_Finding_2:). The recommended actions have been informed by the national evidence-base *Changing the landscape*, the advice of a dedicated Project Advisory Group and consultations with all governments and the primary prevention and disability sector.

In addition to dedicated actions to prevent violence before it occurs, this outcome area should also include policy, program and funding work across early intervention, crisis response and healing and recovery.

Importantly, there is a need to ensure alignment between any focus or actions in this area under the ADS with the National Plan, National Gender Equality Strategy and other relevant strategies and plans, as well as associated outcomes frameworks.

## Outcome Area: Education and learning

Our Watch agrees that inclusive education and learning should be a priority for future work under the ADS. Education and learning settings are places or social contexts in which environmental, organisational and personal factors interact. They are where policy frameworks come to life, and where social and cultural values are produced and reinforced. Given this, it is essential that disability and gender equality approaches are integrated not only into the content being taught in education settings but also into the methods of teaching and learning.

There is an opportunity in the review of the ADS to ensure commitments align to and support Commonwealth Government leadership in relation to respectful relationships education, including through the National Respectful Relationships Education Working Group and provision of funding to state and territory governments to deliver evidence based, age-appropriate consent and respectful relationships education. It is important as part of an evidenced-based approach to respectful relationships education, that people with disabilities and disabled people’s organisations are engaged and included in the design, implementation and governance.

## Outcome Area: Inclusive Homes and Communities

There are numerous barriers that prevent people with disabilities from having equal access to housing, transport, education and public services. This unequal access and opportunity can have further harmful effects. It contributes to the rates of homelessness and insecure housing among people with disabilities, reduces access to employment opportunities, and increases poverty and financial constraints. It also creates significant practical and logistical barriers to obtaining information about what violence and abuse is, and how to report it.[[12]](#endnote-13) There is an opportunity for the ADS to contribute to facilitating access to safe, non-segregated living arrangements and adequate standard of living.

## Outcome Area: Community attitudes

Our Watch strongly agrees that discrimination and disability awareness, authentic representation, and leadership should be priorities for future work under the ADS.

*Changing the landscape* identifies ‘negative stereotypes, assumptions and attitudes about people with disabilities’, ‘accepting or normalising violence, disrespect and discrimination against people with disabilities’ and the ‘controlling of people with disabilities decision-making and limiting of independence’ as three key drivers of violence against women and girls with disabilities.[[13]](#endnote-14) The essential actions identified by *Changing the landscape* to address these drivers are strongly aligned with the focus areas of this Outcome Area. The essential actions include:

* Improve attitudes towards women and girls with disabilities by challenging ableist and sexist stereotypes
* Promote the inclusion of women and girls with disabilities in all aspects of live
* Promote women and girls with disabilities’ independence, agency and participation in leadership and decision-making.[[14]](#endnote-15)

# Next steps

Our Watch commends the commitment to an Independent Evaluation of ADS in 2025-26 and underscores the importance of ongoing monitoring, reflection and refinement.

We are committed to providing ongoing support and advice to all levels of government throughout the review process and in relation to any aspects of this submission.

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