



29 February 2024

Australian Government
Jobs and Skills Australia

Food Supply Chain Capacity Study Terms of Reference

The First Peoples Disability Network (FPDN) welcomes the opportunity to make a submission to the Australian Government draft report on the Food Supply Chain Capacity Study Terms of Reference.

This submission is structured so that responses to the Terms of Reference (ToR) are found on the initial pages, and further information about FPDN, First Nations people with disability, the policy context and data gaps can be found in [Appendix A](#).

About FPDN

The First Peoples Disability Network (FPDN) is the national peak organisation of and for Australia's First Peoples with disability, their families and communities. We actively engage with communities around Australia and represent Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people with disability in Australia and internationally. Our goal is to influence public policy within a human rights framework established by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disability and the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of



Indigenous Peoples. Consistent with our principle of community control, our organisation is governed by First Peoples with lived experience of disability.

FPDN is a Disability Representative Organisation, the Aboriginal community-controlled disability peak, and member of the Coalition of Peaks, a partner to all Australian governments through the National Agreement on Closing the Gap (the National Agreement). FPDN lead the development of the Closing the Gap (CtG) Disability Sector Strengthening Plan and is actively involved in the CtG Housing Sector Strengthening agenda, the CtG Justice Policy Partnership and the CtG Early Childhood and Development Policy Partnership. FPDN is also a key Commonwealth partner dedicated to progressing implementation of *Australia's Disability Strategy 2021-2031*.

Commentary of the Terms of Reference

FPDN supports the development of a sustainable and resilient food supply chain workforce. However, the development of this workforce, must represent the diverse Australian community it serves. FPDN strongly encourages consideration of target employment measures that help understand, recruit, develop and retain employment of First Nations people with disability.

Disability was not mentioned in the Terms of Reference. Approximately 18 per cent of Australians have disability¹ and 48 per cent of people with disability are in the workforce². All Australian Governments have made a commitment to prioritise people with disability under Australia's Disability Strategy. You must reflect this prioritisation, as well as First Nations people in the Terms of Reference.

In addition, FPDN also supports the identification of data gaps within the food supply chain, particularly in regional, remote and very remote areas, this should also be prioritised. This data collection and governance must be shared with relevant First Nations communities to fulfil Australian Government obligations under the National Agreement on Closing the Gap, Priority Reform Four. These insights, contextualised by First Nations people in the workforce

¹ AIHW, '[People with disability in Australia](#),' 2022, accessed 27 February 2024.

² AIHW, '[People with disability in Australia](#),' 2022, accessed 27 February 2024.



and by expert community-controlled organisation could prove vital to understanding impacts of the health and wellbeing of First Nations communities.

Subject to community interest and funding it may be appropriate to partner with First Nations organisations (and/or communities) to embed First Nations knowledges culture into each of the streams of production, transformation and distribution. This could be achieved through application of the Priority Reforms set out under the National Agreement on Closing the Gap³ in all relevant policies, strategies and plans. Additionally, under the Commonwealth Implementation Plan on Closing the Gap disability is a cross-cutting outcome. This means you need to ensure all actions are accessible, inclusive and equitable for First Nations people with disability.

FPDN would also like to bring your attention to the highly relevant United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) and strongly encourage your to include the relevant goals within the Terms of Reference. In particular we would like to draw your attention to SDG 1, 2, 3, 6, 12 and 13⁴ elevating and linking this work to the international rights agenda is crucial to ensure that the food supply chain is accessible, sustainable and healthy into the future.

FPDN would like to thank Jobs and Skills Australia for the opportunity to make this submission.

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³ Closing the Gap, '[National Agreement on Closing the Gap](#),' accessed 27 February 2024.

⁴ United Nations, '[The 17 Goals](#),' accessed 27 February 2024.



Appendix A

About FPDN

FPDN is the community-controlled disability peak and a member of the Coalition of Peaks, a partner to all Australian governments to the Closing the Gap National Agreement. We are also the First Nations Disability Representative Organisation actively representing the voices of First Nations peoples within Australia's Disability Strategy governance structures. For millennia, First Nations peoples, communities, and cultures have practiced models of inclusion. However, despite this, since colonisation, First Peoples with disability and their families have been and continue to be amongst the most seriously disadvantaged and disempowered members of the Australian community. FPDN gives voice to their aspirations, needs and concerns and shares their narratives of lived experience. Our purpose is to promote recognition, respect, protection, and fulfilment of human rights, secure social justice, and empower First Peoples with disability to participate in Australian society on an equal basis with others. To do this, we proactively engage with communities around the country, influence public policy and advocate for the interests of First Peoples with disability in Australia and internationally.

Our extensive national work includes community engagement, capacity building and rights education; systemic advocacy, policy, research, evaluation and data; the development and delivery of evidence-informed training and resources with community for community and to a range of sectors including the Community Controlled sector and mainstream disability sector, Commonwealth and state/territory government policy and service delivery agencies and departments. FPDN also has an international presence and networks, including with the United Nations, and provides consultancy and support to international regions.

We follow the human rights framework established by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), to which Australia is a signatory, and the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP).

We are also guided by both the social and cultural models of disability. The social model views 'disability' to be the result of barriers to equal participation in the social and



physical environment. These barriers can and must be dismantled. However, FPDN recognises the critical need to move beyond a social model to ensure the cultural determinants of what keeps First Nations people with disability strong is centred when working with and in designing policies and programs to improve outcomes for First Nations people. We call this a cultural model of inclusion.

A cultural model of inclusion recognises the diversity of cultures, languages, knowledge systems and beliefs of First Nations people and the importance of valuing and enabling participation in society in ways that are meaningful to First Peoples.⁵ A First Nations cultural model of inclusion includes the human rights framework and the social model of disability to ensure that enablers, approaches, services and supports are culturally safe and inclusive, and disability rights informed. It is the only disability model that seeks to improve the human condition through focussing on what keeps people strong, as distinct to merely negating the adverse impact of difference.

Our community has to operate in multiple worlds – First Nations, disability, and mainstream society. The disability sector reflects this and is a complex and interconnected web of approaches to enable First Nations people with disabilities to realise their rights to participate in all aspects of their life, including safe, affordable, accessible and inclusive housing. These enablers, approaches, services and supports need to exist across the entire life-course, including the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Community Controlled Sector and mainstream disability sector, as well as mainstream organisations and services.

The policy context

FPDN recognises the unique opportunity both Closing the Gap (CTG) and Australia's Disability Strategy to ensure the legislation, policies, programs and service delivery are accessible, inclusive and equitable for First Nations people with disability.

FPDN discussion points and recommendations are in line with the National Agreement on Closing the Gap's Priority Reforms and the CTG Disability Sector Strengthening Plan and its Guiding Principles.

⁵ S Avery, '[Culture is Inclusion](#),' 2018, First Peoples Disability Network.



The CTG Priority Reforms focus on changing the way governments work with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and the Disability Sector Strengthening Plan outlines high-level priorities and actions at a national level to strengthen and build a Community Controlled Disability Sector.

The Disability Sector Strengthening Plan Guiding Principles focus on the following:

- Human rights
- Self-determination
- Cultural integrity
- Cultural safety
- Partnership
- Place based
- Innovation
- Empowerment
- Equity
- Sustainability
- Knowledge
- Nationally consistent approach.

The Commonwealth government, all State and Territory Governments and the Local Government Authority are signatories and partners to the National Agreement and also the Disability Sector Strengthening Plan. The Priority Reforms are:

1. Formal partnerships and shared decision-making
2. Building the community-controlled sector
3. Transforming government organisations
4. Shared access to data and information at a regional level

Applying the Closing the Gap approach to disability as a cross-cutting outcome through the Priority Reforms and socio-economic targets offer structure to government to ensure First Nations peoples with disability have:

- A greater say in how policies and programs are designed and delivered;



- Have access to community-controlled services and sectors that delivers culturally safe, accessible and inclusive, and disability right informed services;
- Have access to mainstream organisations and services, such as NDIS services, hospitals, schools and government agencies, that are culturally safe, accessible and inclusive, and disability right informed;
- And have access to, and the capability to use, locally-relevant, First Nations disability informed, data and information.

First Nations people with disability

For millennia, First Nations peoples, communities, and cultures have practiced models of inclusion. This embracing of diversity and inclusion “is derived from a belief system and worldview of humanity in which biological, physical and intellectual differences are accepted as part of the fabric of society.”⁶ Drawing on nation-wide available data, First Nations people with disability are included in their own communities across social, cultural and community events on average more than other Australians with disability.

However, despite this strength, since colonisation First Nations people with disability experience significant levels of inequality across all other life areas compared to other Australians, including in areas of health, education and social inequality.⁷ Whilst population prevalence data is limited, First Nations people are twice as likely to experience disability than the rest of the Australian population.⁸ Using the statistical definitions of ‘severe and profound disability’ in the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) datasets, including the *ABS Survey of Disability, Ageing and Carers (SDAC), 2018*,⁹ it is estimated that over 60,000 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people live with severe or profound disability in Australia today.¹⁰

⁶ S Avery, ‘[Culture is Inclusion](#),’ 2018, First Peoples Disability Network.

⁷ S Avery, ‘[Culture is Inclusion](#),’ 2018, First Peoples Disability Network: Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) (2016) *National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Survey*, (NATSISS) 2014-15 (Release 4714.0).

⁸ Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) (2016) *National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Survey*, (NATSISS) 2014-15 (Release 4714.0).

⁹ ABS, ‘[Disability, Ageing and Carers, Australia: Summary of Findings](#),’ 2018, accessed 29 August 2023.

¹⁰ S Avery, ‘[Culture is Inclusion](#),’ 2018, First Peoples Disability Network.



First Nations people with disability experience many intersectional forms of discrimination, including discrimination based on age, gender, sexuality and geographic location. These intersecting forms of discrimination are institutionalised and embedded in how policies and programs have been designed, including the NDIS.

Consistent with the social and cultural models of disability within which FPDN works, we recognise that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are disproportionately affected by poor outcomes. This impact is widespread and has social, emotional, physical, economic and cultural impacts.

Australia's Disability Strategy

Australia's Disability Strategy (2021-2030) (ADS) is Australia's national disability policy framework and plays a role in protecting, promoting and realising the human rights of people with disability, in line with Australia's commitments under the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UN CRPD). All levels of government developed and committed to the Strategy, which sets out priorities and plans for governments to work with the community, businesses, and peoples with disability to deliver the needed changes identified by the sector. The Strategy recognises the importance of making sure actions taken to deliver on its policy priorities are implemented with an intersectional and diversity lens.

First Nations Disability Data Gap

As noted in the Disability Sector Strengthening Plan, First Nations people with disability sit on the periphery of both national disability policies, frameworks, data infrastructure or research agendas. In effect, this means data about and evidence by First Nations people with disability are often not captured in its own right. This has key implications for how data and evidence is captured in relation to First Nations people with disability and their unique experiences of interaction with the service systems and all other aspects of life, including what living well looks like for a First Nation person with disability. Existing data and research is often limited in scope, and often does not provide sufficient focus to all experiences of disability in regional, remote or urban contexts. FPDN is in the process of developing a



broad First Nations disability data strategy, however, there is a need for dedicated First Nations Disability data project with specific intersectional data on autism.

Human Rights

The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) aligns with CTG through its general principles which focus on respect, non-discrimination, participation and inclusion, equality, and accessibility.¹¹ These align with CTG Priority Reforms 1 through 3.

United Nations Declarations on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP)¹² centre around equality, freedom from discrimination, recognition of historic injustices, respect for Indigenous knowledge, cultures and practices, and acknowledging the right for Indigenous people to retain shared responsibility for sharing knowledge and exercising self-determination. These declarations align with each of the four CTG Priority Reforms.

It must be noted that each of these Strategies and Declarations have been signed and ratified by government at all levels. All CTG priority reforms and targets are visible but not often met. The CTG Agreement has been operating for three years with ample time to implement priority reforms. There needs to be a greater commitment from all levels of government to meet timelines in an efficient and timely manner.

¹¹ United Nations, 'Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities,' accessed 5 October 2023.

¹² United Nations, 'United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples,' 2007, accessed 5 October 2023.