

# Count Me In



**A better future for  
everyone**



# Contents

|   |           |
|---|-----------|
| <b>Count Me In at a glance.....</b>                               | <b>4</b>  |
| <b>Economic and Community Foundations.....</b>                    | <b>8</b>  |
| <b>Participation and Contribution in all aspects of life.....</b> | <b>13</b> |
| <b>Personalised Supports and Services.....</b>                    | <b>22</b> |
| <b>Keeping the process alive and committed .....</b>              | <b>34</b> |
| <b>Implementing priorities and pathways.....</b>                  | <b>36</b> |
| <b>Endnotes .....</b>   | <b>37</b> |

# Count Me In

## Count Me In at a glance

### Vision

All people live in welcoming communities that facilitate citizenship, friendship, mutual support and a fair go for everyone.

Western Australia will look substantially different in 15 to 20 years time. There will be many more people who have a disability, most over 65 years of age, and many more senior citizens than younger people (see endnote 1). West Australians will live in changed economic, social and environmental circumstances. With this future in mind, Count Me In sets out 13 priorities to shape a good future for people with disability, their families and carers that will also benefit many other West Australians.

At the heart of Count Me In lies the vision of a Western Australia where all people live in welcoming communities that actively promote citizenship, friendship, mutual support and a fair go for everyone. It involves a long-term process with multiple changes across the board – to housing, transport, community attitudes, education, employment and technology, as well as service delivery in rural, remote and metropolitan areas.

Many people helped in the formation of this vision: people with disability, their families and carers, community members, service providers and government representatives (see endnote 2). As part of the process, they thought about the shape of society now and in the future, the forces that divide us, the particular challenges facing people with disability from Aboriginal and culturally diverse backgrounds, the strengths of people with disability and the barriers confronting them. Information was gathered through:

- a series of monograph papers which explored future social, economic and environmental trends and their effect on West Australians
- discussions with people with disability, their families, carers and service providers
- workshops to develop priorities.

Together participants identified 13 priority areas that need to be tackled for Western Australia to be a truly welcoming and affirming place for all. These are discussed in the main part of this document, together with the pathways for achieving them. These priorities and pathways fall under three complementary areas – Economic and Community Foundations, Participation and Contribution and Personalised Supports and Services. Making strong progress in each of these areas is vital to achieve the vision for people with disability and for all West Australians.

## **Economic and Community Foundations**

Financial security, well-planned communities and affordable, accessible housing are fundamental to wellbeing. Without them, people cannot enjoy a satisfactory standard of living, have a safe and enjoyable home, move around easily, and participate and contribute in communities of their choice.

Economic and Community Foundations have always been a priority to people with disability and the Disability Services Commission. Currently one in five people report that they have a disability. In 15 years, this figure is expected to increase to around one in four people with most of the increase due to people, mainly baby-boomers, developing disability after 65 years of age. Acting now to establish well-planned communities and housing that everyone can live in makes good social and economic sense – it will enable most people with disability and senior West Australians to continue to participate successfully in community life throughout their lives. The challenge for Count Me In, however, is to harness the energy and commitment of Commonwealth, State and Local Government agencies responsible for these areas to bring about positive change.

## **Participation and Contribution**

Everyone in Western Australia has a right to be involved in all aspects of life and their unique contributions valued. Developing communities which genuinely welcome, respect and value the involvement of people with disability will lead to communities that welcome many others including people from culturally diverse and Aboriginal backgrounds and people who are senior citizens.

Developing greater community participation and contribution will help Western Australia to fulfil its responsibilities under the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disability. The Convention requires full inclusion of people with disability in all aspects of society including the creation of conditions for people to live independently. The process used to develop the Convention involved a high level of participation from people with disability and their representative organisations, with continuing participation expected and encouraged as implementation and monitoring occur. Count Me In, in turn, will foster strong and ongoing participation in all levels of planning and monitoring.

# Count Me In

## Personalised Supports and Services

West Australians with disability who are under 65 years and who need assistance with essential tasks of daily living receive most support from family members and community networks. They are also eligible for personalised supports and services provided by the Commission or by non-government organisations. These supports and services can be critical to maintaining everyday wellbeing, a safe, healthy lifestyle, to participating in communities and to ensuring economic and community rights are upheld.

Although one in four West Australians is likely to have a disability in 15 years, only 14 per cent of these people, will need personal assistance in self-care, mobility or communication, making them eligible to access the personalised supports and services funded or provided by the Commission. While people who have a severe or profound (see endnote 3) level of disability also gain considerable benefit from developments in the two other areas of focus – Economic and Community Foundations and Participation and Contribution in all areas of life – it is of critical importance for many to receive ongoing personalised support and services to complement the other two areas.

People involved in developing Count Me In emphasised that personalised supports and services must:

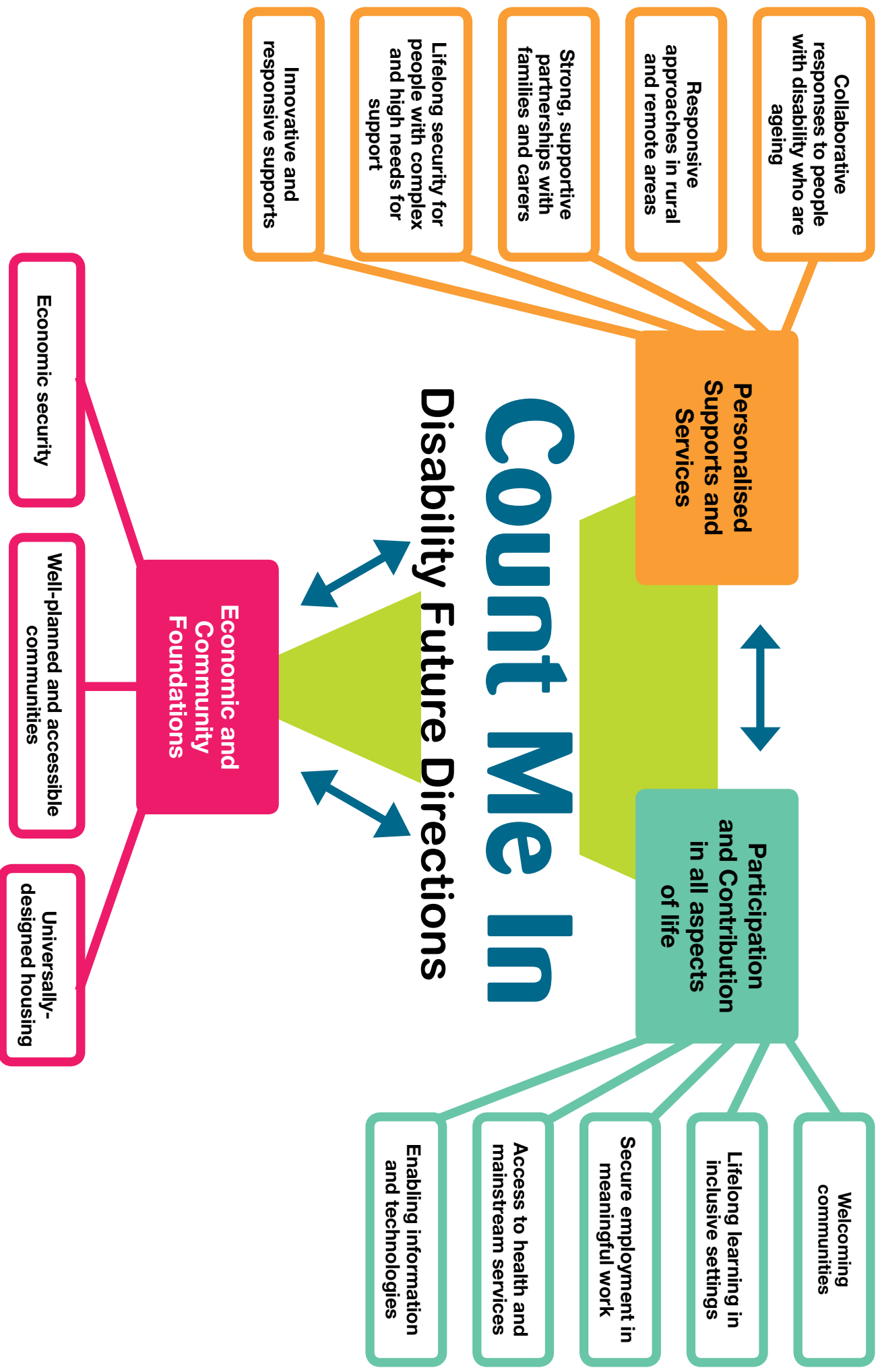
- be responsive, contemporary and innovative
- keep pace with demand
- increase choice and control for people with disability, their families and carers
- be delivered in ways that create more opportunities for community participation and contribution
- develop the capacity of people with disability, their families and carers to participate in all levels of organisational decision-making
- ensure the needs of people with disability who have complex or high needs remain clearly in view and effective responses are developed
- respond to the unique needs of people with disability who experience early ageing or who are reaching senior years
- continue to foster a range of ways to support families and carers
- create more responsive approaches for people living in rural and remote areas.

The remainder of this document describes:

- each of the three areas of focus in turn, together with their priorities and pathways
- the process for implementing priorities and pathways
- ideas for keeping the Count Me In process alive and invigorated over the long term.

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## Disability Future Directions



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## Economic and community foundations

**Economic security**

**Well-planned and accessible communities**

**Universally-designed housing**

In a society as affluent as Australia, economic security, a place to call home, and well-planned, safe, accessible community living should be available to all. Our society is highly unequal, however many people with disability, their families and carers are among the worst off. Forty five per cent of people with disability in Australia live in or near poverty – more than double the OECD average of 22 per cent. As well as income restriction, they face extra costs relating to housing, transport, aids and equipment. Without concerted action this situation could remain stagnant or deteriorate.

Between now and 2025 we will experience higher costs of energy, fuel, building and food, which will affect all West Australians and create widening gaps between rich and poor. Financial hardship increases personal and family stress and can undermine physical and emotional health. It makes community

participation more difficult and creates social exclusion.

Count Me In identifies three priority areas to create solid economic and community foundations:

- economic security
- well-planned, accessible communities
- universally-designed housing (see endnote 4).

### Priority Area: Economic security

#### People who participated said...

We want to get good jobs and have good pensions. To have money.

(There is) not enough assistance to get a house or apartment, to get a loan.

People with disability and their carers have to compete for funds, with the first call on funds being the people who need them most... It's not a rights model of funding.

Climate change (signals) the end of abundance as we know it. Changes to agriculture, economic effects, recessions and increasing insurance premiums mean higher prices which always hit the poorest.



Economic security is a fundamental requirement for all West Australians. No one can have a good life without enough money to meet housing, energy, food and medical costs, and enough money to enjoy friends, activities and recreation. Many individuals rely on the disability support pension which remains significantly below the poverty line, others find it challenging to get and keep rewarding and well-paid jobs, family and carers work less hours than others or do not work at all.

There is little possibility, under these circumstances, to make investments and build wealth. People with disability are more likely to be renting than owning their home and are often unable to obtain or afford homes in the areas that are close to work, transport, family, friends and activities. There are numerous ways in which this situation could be radically improved. No single measure will be sufficient on its own, and cooperation is needed between levels and sectors of government in conjunction with employers and private enterprise.



## Pathways to build economic security

**Pathway 1** – Promote the benefits to people with disability, their families, carers and the Australian Government of providing adequate funds for the growing numbers of people with disability by adopting social insurance schemes, for example, a no-fault accident insurance scheme and a national disability insurance scheme.

**Pathway 2** – Recognise and offset the additional and ongoing costs associated with having a disability by:

- complementing the earnings of people with disability, their families and carers who are working with adequate levels of government assistance, for example through pensions, taxation incentives, concessions and fee relief
- ensuring that people with disability, their families and carers who don't work achieve economic security with adequate levels of government assistance, for example through pensions, concessions and fee relief.

**Pathway 3** – Increase the ability of people with disability, their families and carers to own homes through shared equity partnerships.

**Pathway 4** – Increase economic security through taxation incentives for disability trusts, disability savings plans, investment in accessible housing and assistance with investment planning.

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## Priority Area: Well-planned and accessible communities

### People who participated said...

If we can't drive we want a safe public transport system.

People with disability consistently report that they do not have the same opportunities as others to participate in community life. They face daily barriers such as being unable to physically access a building, hear what is said, read print, climb stairs, understand signage or communicate effectively with other people.

Well-planned communities linked to streamlined transport are fundamental to creating accessible, welcoming and stimulating places to live. Good planning means designing new communities and renewing older communities in ways that enable people to move around easily and safely – in their homes, outside their homes, on footpaths, in cafes, getting to schools, parks and other amenities. It means more accessible public housing in all areas of Western Australia. It also means creating new and different styles of accessible housing, both public and private, to suit the needs of people with disability, large and small families and people of different ages and cultural groups.



## Pathways to well-planned and accessible communities

**Pathway 1** – Develop well-planned and accessible communities by:

- extending planning initiatives which currently integrate town planning, housing and transport including Liveable Neighbourhoods, the Model Scheme Text and Directions 2031
- involving people with disability, their families and carers in planning and development
- creating a common vision for town planners, developers and architects.

**Pathway 2** – Establish, promote and enforce stronger town planning codes and zoning classifications including the Residential Design Codes:

- to support the development of accessible communities and universally-designed housing
- to enable greater scope for developers to make innovative use of land to achieve more accessible communities.

**Pathway 3** – Create greater access to buildings and facilities by promoting widespread understanding of and compliance with the Access to Premises Standards.

**Pathway 4** – Harness the growing numbers of senior West Australians, who have a personal investment in ageing services, to advocate for well-planned and accessible communities.

## Priority Area: Universally-designed housing

### People who participated said...

Universal design hasn't come into its own yet. Philosophies of universal design will need to impact on how local government does business, for example, to enable people to stay in their communities.

My parents live in a retirement village and were not allowed to have a wheel in shower or an accessible toilet... so I could visit and for their future requirements. Their driveway has a very steep gradient as do a lot in this village.

Creating buildings, products and environments that are useable and effective for everyone is vital if all West Australians are to live with security and ease. To achieve this, the principles of universal design need to be applied to private and public housing as well as the surrounding community.

These measures need to be complemented by energy-efficient house construction. Global warming threatens the basic elements of life for people around the world – access to water, food, health, and use of land and water environment. We know that Western Australia is likely to experience increased temperatures, decreased rainfall, increased sea levels, droughts, bushfires, storms and tropical cyclones. Given this, people with disability, their families and carers may well face increased costs of energy and food, more life-threatening events if communication systems fail, and a general exacerbation of health problems. Designing housing for energy efficiency as well as universal access is vital for their future.

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## Pathways to universally-designed housing

**Pathway 1** – Ensure a high percentage of public and private housing incorporates universal and climate control design which are affordable to everyone.

**Pathway 2** – Increase the number of public housing with universal design located in all areas of Western Australia to minimise waiting lists and provide greater geographical choice for people with disability.

**Pathway 3** – Incorporate universal design into a wider range of housing styles, for example in high-rise apartments near the hub of communities, in cluster housing and in inter-generational housing for people with disability, their families and carers who want to co-locate for caring, cultural and other reasons.

**Pathway 4** – Promote universal and climate control design in housing as having long-term social, financial and other benefits for people who want to live in their homes for many years.

**Pathway 5** – Increase education in universal and climate control design through the Housing Industry Association of Western Australia and other significant bodies for architects, town planners, builders, designers and developers.

**Pathway 6** – Invite high-profile building companies and redevelopment authorities to develop affordable universal and climate control designs for public housing and 'off-the-shelf' options for private homes.

**Pathway 7** – Provide tax and superannuation incentives for companies and people who invest in housing with universal and climate control design.

**Pathway 8** – Recognise and support universal design initiatives by the Australian Network for Universal Housing Design and other organisations.



# Participation and contribution in all aspects of life

Welcoming communities

Lifelong learning in inclusive settings

Secure employment in meaningful work

Access to health and mainstream services

Enabling information and technologies

## People who participated said...

Those contributing to the formation of Count Me In look to a time when people with disability are totally included and welcomed in mainstream community life and their contributions and strengths recognised. A time when:

- People with disability are valued and contributing members of the community, not a marginalised or 'special' group that requires 'specialised responses'.
- People with disability will be engaged and embedded in their local community. They **will** make a meaningful contribution, **will** have relationships and friends, **will** make their own choices about big and small issues/decisions in their lives.
- People with disability are afforded full citizenship. Citizenship is the ultimate measure.

For this to happen considerable change is necessary. Five priority areas are singled out:

- welcoming communities
- lifelong learning in inclusive settings
- secure employment in meaningful work
- access to health and mainstream services
- information and enabling technologies.



# Count Me In

## Priority Area: Welcoming communities

### People who participated said...

To achieve inclusive communities ... we need real leadership to get beyond the initial reaction of rejection, alienation, difference and the 'other' to be scape-goated.

Inclusion can't happen by itself, it needs to be planned and made sustainable. As able and disabled people get to know each other, the exclusion that comes from a sense of difference might fall away.

Much of the discussion about community inclusion has a local focus, but the broader public arena – where considerable barriers continue to exist – is just as important (see endnote 5). As well as community education, there is a need for individual capacity building so that people with disability can actively participate in political processes and control the development of policies and programs that affect them.



### Pathways to Welcoming communities

**Pathway 1** – Strongly support individuals, families and carers who want to develop the skills and confidence to:

- be future leaders and champions of community change
- participate in all levels of political and agency decision-making.

**Pathway 2** – Promote the responsibility of community members to support, welcome and include people with disability, their families and carers by:

- helping West Australians understand what it is like to have a disability, the challenges of participating in community life, and the benefits to communities who are inclusive
- providing whole-of-community education about the responsibilities of West Australians to include people with disability under the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disability.

**Pathway 3** – Build the capacity of communities to support, welcome and include people with disability, their families and carers by:

- working with local governments to ensure local groups include people with disability

- funding inclusive initiatives undertaken by local groups on their own or in partnerships with disability groups
- supporting community networks, advocacy groups and individuals who build the capacity of communities and help individuals to participate
- representing the unique needs of Aboriginal people and people from culturally diverse backgrounds who may experience additional disadvantage in relation to inclusion
- working with communities to develop ways to assist families and carers in their caring role, including the facilitation of networks to counter isolation.

**Pathway 4** – Ensure individual advocacy, self advocacy and other supports are available to foster community participation, with particular assistance available to those who face considerable challenges in joining community life: for example people who have need for intensive, everyday medical support, people with multiple disabilities, people who are unable to speak for themselves in the community without assistance and people with complex and challenging behaviour.

**Pathway 5** – Continue to develop innovative strategies to promote participation for people with disability in sport, recreation, tourism, transport, culture and the arts.

## Priority Area: Lifelong learning in inclusive settings

### People who participated said...

The most important thing to remember is to take care of the whole person with disability. For example, think about their education and... plan for the future.

Education is a key to inclusive society... Inclusive classrooms from K-12 taught by teachers who come from university (and) equipped with multi-level teaching skills, will build healthier, valuing and welcoming communities. Encouragement for young people to finish Year 12 and enter further education can only broaden networks and opportunities to join the workforce in meaningful employment with independent skills and personal networks.



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Education plays a key role in creating an inclusive society. Schools, universities, community courses and other learning environments provide people with skills, knowledge and qualifications. They also foster personal confidence and opportunities to build new relationships and interests. In turn, personal and social confidence helps in other areas such as getting and keeping a job.

However, barriers for people with disability persist. There are administrative hurdles, shortfalls in staff with specialist training, and a lack of sustained support, particularly at tertiary level. Given the key role of education in building citizenship, it is vital these are overcome. Particular attention also needs to be given to those who face the double challenge of disability and other forms of minority status, in particular people from Aboriginal and culturally diverse backgrounds (see endnote 6).

In brief, education is a priority area that must be championed over the long term regardless of economic, social and resource pressures to provide non-inclusive education.



## Pathways to lifelong learning in inclusive settings

**Pathway 1** – Support lifelong learning for children, adults and seniors with disability commencing in early childhood and progressing to school, colleges, universities and beyond.

**Pathway 2** – Identify and examine the real and perceived barriers to inclusive learning and devise strategies to address and overcome these barriers.

**Pathway 3** – Continue to develop resources to educate and inform staff, parent bodies and student organisations associated with all educational settings about disability and inclusive education.

**Pathway 4** – Use information technologies and distance learning to facilitate lifelong learning and promote the many new opportunities technology has and will create in the future.

**Pathway 5** – Develop more innovative ways for people with disability to participate in universities and colleges over their lifetime.

**Pathway 6** – Promote inclusive schooling as a key way to foster positive relationships between children which will build more inclusive work, recreation and relationships in other areas throughout their lives.



**Pathway 7** – Promote effective transition planning at key points in the lifelong learning process and provide support to address the emotional and practical challenges that arise during transition.

**Pathway 8** – Ensure the unique educational needs of children and adults with disability from Aboriginal and culturally diverse backgrounds are identified and addressed.

**Pathway 9** – Acknowledge principals, teachers and other leaders who embrace inclusive and contemporary approaches to education and lifelong learning.

**Pathway 10** – Engage champions of inclusive approaches to encourage communities, school and educational centres to embrace inclusive lifelong learning.

## Priority Area: Secure employment in meaningful work

### People who participated said...

If your son or daughter requires a reasonably high level intervention, you might say to yourself it'd be a better option to pump for a State-run day options program that might get us 25 hours a week than to risk open employment that might get us eight... That's a real barrier.

If we are having trouble getting a good job – we want the government to help us.

Inclusion is a good idea but the reality is different. There's a lack of awareness, understanding and acceptance of diversity. Acceptance needs to filter through schools and workplaces. It requires a shift of mindset.



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A job is one of the most significant roles in most people's lives and provides economic security, self-esteem, friends and ongoing learning and development. Many people with disability want a job but may not be confident to tackle interviews, work routines and environments. Others experience being rejected at interviews due to having a disability and needing extra support at work. Still others face barriers in securing a job that uses their expertise and gives them the same opportunities for career progression as work colleagues.

There are many structural barriers to the labour force participation of people with disability. The split of responsibilities between three Commonwealth departments and between Commonwealth and State programs creates confusion and inflexibility. Specialist support for those attempting to access employment from tertiary studies or from state-funded alternatives to employment is limited. This is crucial as once people are participating in state-funded alternatives they are unlikely to move to employment. On the other hand, many families find that open employment compromises their capacity to plan for their child and other family members if the hours and supports are not secure. Alternatives to employment, or day options, are then considered more attractive, with the risk that that young person may find her or himself increasingly locked out of the mainstream workforce.

School preparation, employer commitment and flexibility and getting the right types of support are therefore key pathways to moving forward.

## Pathways to secure employment in meaningful work

**Pathway 1** – Ensure children with disability attend regular schools wherever possible and receive strong encouragement and preparation for employment including mentoring from people with disability and established careers.

**Pathway 2** – Increase the incentives for people with disability, their families and carers to work by improving salaries and by complementing the earnings of people with disability, their families and carers with adequate levels of government assistance through pensions, taxation incentives, concessions and fee relief.

**Pathway 3** – Continue to raise awareness in school, community and workplaces of the contribution and capacity of people with disability as employees.

**Pathway 4** – Enable people with disability to compete for jobs and career advancement based on expertise and ability and to receive appropriate levels of technological and other support.

**Pathway 5** – Provide career planning and employment advocacy for people with disability, their families and carers.

**Pathway 6** – Provide additional and culturally appropriate assistance to people from Aboriginal and culturally diverse backgrounds who may experience double disadvantage when seeking and maintaining employment.

**Pathway 7** – Provide taxation and other financial incentives to employers who adopt positive employment practices.

**Pathway 8** – Support the employment of people with disability by:

- limiting government procurement of services to companies that employ people with disability
- setting an increased target (for example up to 20 per cent) for the number of people with disability employed across all government agencies, and encouraging local governments to do the same.

## Priority Area: Access to health and mainstream services

### People who participated said...

People with disability have the right to receive the same quality of services as others in the community – this includes appropriate health and medical services. The lack of knowledge and understanding of the needs of people with disability within the health and medical professions is evident.

We need to get good health care that is right for the person and their culture. Our family is from a Chinese background. Chinese culture is different from Western culture, even when it is about health. We use a mixture of medicines and treatments.



One of the main signs that people with disability are being truly included in Western Australia is when health, mental health, education, justice and other government services respond to people who have a wide range of disabilities, want and need. The Disability Access and Inclusion Plans required of each public authority are central to achieving this goal. The strong voice of people with disability, their families, carers, and the support of community networks and service providers in the disability sector is also key to driving this approach.

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## Pathways to health and mainstream services

**Pathway 1** – Ensure that mainstream services increasingly respond to the needs of people with disability, their families and carers through strengthening Disability Access and Inclusion Plans, and by working with the Human Rights Commission and the West Australian Equal Opportunity Commission.

**Pathway 2** – Improve the access of people with disability to quality health, allied health, dental and related care by:

- providing improved information, education, training and ongoing support to healthcare professionals
- arranging ways to share and transfer information about people with disability across departments and jurisdictions
- providing practical and advocacy support for people with disability, their families and carers who want assistance to access mainstream health and related services
- improving service portability between states and territories
- ensuring culturally responsive services are available to people from Aboriginal and culturally diverse backgrounds.

**Pathway 3** – Collaborate with government agencies to develop effective service responses to acquired disability including:

- Foetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder, in particular for Aboriginal children
- Acquired Brain Injury through motor vehicle accidents and drug and alcohol use
- other conditions that are likely to develop in people with disability as they live longer, such as Alzheimer's disease.

**Pathway 4** – Coordinate effective and timely service responses between disability services and mainstream agencies for people with disability who also have:

- challenging personal or aggressive social behaviours
- mental health disability
- involvement with the justice system
- ongoing and intensive medical needs.



## Priority Area: Enabling information and technologies

### People who participated said...

The use and further development of technology will increase people's independence as they age.

Opportunities (exist) to get people 'online' and (for them to) get to know virtual communities. Every home where people with intellectual disability live should be provided with a computer and access to the internet.

Assistive technological aids are very expensive. A very convenient and portable scanning device that plugs into the computer and can be used to scan documents... is \$4,000. A handy little magnifier that is portable and will freeze information on the screen... is \$1,200. Software packages can be hundreds of dollars.

Rapidly developing information, communication and assistive technologies have the potential to open up a range of opportunities to people with disability. Computer technology and other electronic aids, for example, have the potential to redress functional limitations and greatly increase independence and socialisation at home, in the workplace and in other community settings. Making sure these technologies are affordable, adapted for use by people with different types of disability and made readily available to borrow or purchase is vital.

### Pathways to enabling information and technologies

**Pathway 1** – Ensure that people with disability can easily access and afford new developments in assistive technologies and the technical support needed to maintain their effective use.

**Pathway 2** – Ensure that people with disability have access to library, internet and other sources of information. This includes assistive computer technology made available in libraries, schools, universities, workplaces, community settings and at home.

**Pathway 3** – Encourage involvement in web-based interest groups and social networking groups as an important way to achieve connection to others.

**Pathway 4** – Improve the benefits of assistive technology through better matches between individual needs and equipment and by training people in their effective use.

**Pathways 5** – Champion improvement and innovation in assistive technology as a key way to promote participation in community life.

**Pathway 6** – Explore the use of medical and rehabilitative technologies to improve health, wellbeing, and independence in home and community.

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## Personalised Supports and Services

**Innovative and responsive supports**

**Lifelong security for people with complex and high needs for support**

**Strong, supportive partnerships with families and carers**

**Responsive approaches in rural and remote areas**

**Collaborative responses to people with disability who are ageing**

### People who participated said...

None of us really have the answers. I would like to see that by the time my son is in his mid-20s he would already be on the path to living somewhere away from home, on his own with people to help him or with other people with disability who need help to do things. If that is what people want they should be able to choose it. Wherever people live it should be a safe place... There should be security and support for people to give whatever help is needed, and to check and make sure that everything is all right.

Personalised expertise, support and services can be critical to maintaining everyday wellbeing and a safe, healthy lifestyle for people with disability who have a severe or profound level of need. Personalised supports and services complement and actively support the other two areas of focus within Count Me In – the role played by mainstream services and community groups in welcoming and involving people with disability and the role played by the built environment in creating places which all people can use.

Most of the personalised supports and services for people with disability in Western Australia, their families and carers are provided by the Commission, funded disability non-government organisations and parent, individual and community support groups. Although these are specialised supports specifically developed for people with disability, it is



imperative that they work with mainstream and local supports to increase opportunities for people with disability to live and participate in everyday community activities in environments used by all.

It is also essential that personalised supports and services are culturally responsive to the diverse needs of people with disability, their families and carers from culturally diverse and Aboriginal backgrounds. Western Australia has a highly diverse population, with a high and rising proportion of people from culturally diverse backgrounds, including many from new and emerging groups. More than a quarter of the population were born overseas, more than 170 different languages are spoken and more than 100 different faiths are practised.

In relation to Aboriginal people, significant and enduring differences exist between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people on all main indicators of health and socio-economic disadvantage including life-expectancy, health, education, financial security and employment.

In addition, Aboriginal people have a higher incidence of disability for all disability types, about 38 per cent of Aboriginal people aged over 15 years report that they have a disability and nine per cent report a severe or profound core activity limitation.

Despite these figures, less than a fifth of those estimated to be eligible access personalised supports and services. It is important to ensure that, in addition to providing culturally responsive support, these services work together with mainstream and other services that may be involved with families to address pressing health, education, justice and other issues.

A number of challenges face the disability sector in providing personalised supports and services. These include funding restrictions, difficulties recruiting qualified staff and high labour turnover. The five priorities described under this area of focus stress the importance of achieving better support with the funding and human capital that exists and grows each year.

This could be achieved through developing innovative approaches, responsive partnerships with individuals, families and carers and collaborative initiatives between all combinations of stakeholders across all areas of Western Australia.



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## Priority Area: Innovative and responsive supports

### People who participated said...

For a person with Down syndrome, I need good information (that) I understand, support, as well as understanding, to achieve my goals.

I look to a future in which...

- families and individuals have the supports they require to plan and achieve a vision for their lives
- people with disability live where they want, how they want, and with whom they want
- people with disability and their families have free choices and the right to choose the level, extent and timeframe that they will provide care.

There must be support for a person with disability, or their family where appropriate, to manage their own funds in a variety of ways. This will allow for creative services, ownership and flexibility for a person with disability to meet their own individual needs...

People who have a severe or profound level of disability, their families and carers want access to supports and services that make a real difference to their lives. From young families who want their toddler with a disability to learn to feed, talk, walk and play; to parents who want a job or everyday recreation for their son or

daughter when school finishes, to older families and carers who are struggling with health issues and can no longer provide care, to people with disability in senior years – all want support and services as they need them and long before crises happen.

There is a big call for Count Me In to advocate for increased services so that people don't have to wait until crises occur, for a greater range of service options and for the development of innovative approaches so that individuals, families and carers have real choice and control.

### Pathways to innovative and responsive support

**Pathway 1** – Enable people with disability, their families and carers to access the critical supports, funding and services they need as they need them by making available:

- person-centred planning to facilitate decision-making and regular reviews of plans, in particular at times of life transition and changing need
- funding that can be used flexibly to respond to individual circumstances at all ages and stages of life
- services that are easy to reach geographically or are provided at home
- an increased range of funding, supports and services to enable timely response to need.



**Pathway 2** – Champion the development of innovative support, funding and service approaches to provide more options for people with disability, their families and carers, for example the proposed National Disability Insurance Scheme, the Community Living Plan and increased opportunities for people to manage their funding and supports.

**Pathway 3** – Ensure there are good, safe, alternative homes for individuals to live in when living with family or carers is no longer possible or appropriate, and provide assistance to address the emotional and practical challenges that arise when moving to a new home and lifestyle.

**Pathway 4** – Maintain a well-trained, capable disability workforce by addressing long-term disability workforce issues, including workforce training, and the low rate of wages relative to other human service sectors.



**Pathway 5** – Support the valuable role of disability funded non-government organisations and Commission-funded services in their specialised role, and work collaboratively to:

- improve service responsiveness
- increase access to contemporary, innovative services which promote the participation and contribution of people with disability in their communities
- recognise and facilitate the pivotal role of families and carers
- address ongoing economic viability and workforce issues.

**Pathway 6** – Acknowledge the integral contribution of unfunded disability groups and networks in promoting and facilitating self-determination and community engagement for people with disability and support their involvement in disability sector information, training, activities and decision-making forums.

**Pathway 7** – Ensure that disability services are culturally responsive to the diverse needs of both Aboriginal people and people from culturally diverse backgrounds, including the assessment of eligibility and functional needs.

**Pathway 8** – Undertake research, evaluation, forecasting and consultation to identify long-term needs and gaps in services.

# Count Me In

## Priority Area: Lifelong security for people with complex and high needs for support

### People who participated said...

My concern for the future is that:

- People with disability with health and mental issues will be neglected.
- A lot of good things will happen for most people with disability, but (I am) concerned that some with more profound disability will not fit into this 'bright new world'. (My) fear is that government won't commit to safeguard the minority with the greatest needs.

People who need high levels of continuous, daily support over their lifetime, or who have challenging and complex needs – in particular those who cannot speak for themselves – require special focus and assistance to ensure their voices are heard and their needs are met and safeguarded in all aspects of life.

These are also the individuals referred to in Welcoming Communities, Pathway 4, who face considerable challenges in joining community life and who are unlikely to be invited to join community initiatives. They include people with disability who need intensive, everyday medical support, people with multiple disabilities, people who are unable to speak for themselves in the community without assistance and people with complex and challenging behaviour.

Participants in Count Me In stressed that these people need to be kept clearly in focus to make sure they, too, have many opportunities to participate and contribute to community life. The pathways for this Priority Area are in addition to those in the previous section.

### Pathways to Lifelong security for people with complex and high needs for support

**Pathway 1** – Safeguard the rights, safety and wellbeing of people with complex and high needs for support by:

- helping people with disability, their families and carers understand service systems and how to advocate for what they need and want
- streamlining and simplifying service systems so that people with disability, their families and carers can understand and navigate these systems
- ensuring that individuals who have most of their care provided by service systems, either have a network of family members or friends to speak on their behalf, or have ongoing access to personal advocates to safeguard their rights.



**Pathway 2** – Coordinate effective and timely service responses between disability services and mainstream agencies for people with disability who also have:

- challenging personal or aggressive social behaviours
- mental health disability
- involvement with the justice system
- ongoing and intensive medical needs.

**Pathway 3** – Ensure that people with complex and high support needs have access to:

- essential health, medical, dental and therapy services
- the latest advances in specialist medical and assistive technologies.

**Pathway 4** – Develop and maintain individual and systemic advocacy to ensure that the authentic voice of people with disability, their families and carers who are unable to represent themselves without assistance is heard and responded to, including people from Aboriginal and culturally diverse backgrounds.

**Pathway 5** – Ensure that people with complex and high support needs, along with other people with disability, have access to a range of housing and alternatives to employment options when maintaining a job is not possible.

## Priority Area: Strong, supportive partnerships with families and carers

### People who participated said...

Caring is... a reciprocal relationship with benefits for each party rather than... a burden for one party. The strengths and gifts of each person in the relationship (need to be) acknowledged and the role of carer recognised and valued by the community.

My husband received four hours a week home help as respite assistance for over four years. Then the full four hours were ceased when it was interpreted differently. He also cares for his elderly parents.

Family carers have two key concerns:

- How can I get through today
- Who will care when I'm gone

They need peace of mind on both these matters.

It will continue to be the women who care, who continue to age in poverty because they are left with the caring role.



# Count Me In

About one in 10 West Australians is a family carer of a person with disability, with more than one-third of carers having a disability themselves (see endnote 7).

Most carers are women aged between 45 and 54 years who provide, on average, 40 hours or more of care each week. Because of their home-based responsibilities, carers are much less likely to have a job (39 per cent) compared to non-carers (68 per cent, see endnote 8). Many do not view themselves as carers but consider their role as an extension of the relationship shared with the person they provide care for.

The multitude of issues facing carers is well documented and includes:

- decline in physical, mental and emotional health
- facing poverty and economic hardship
- not enough breaks from caring
- insufficient activities or employment for their family member with disability to enjoy during the day
- lack of reassurance that an alternative, supported home is available when caring is no longer possible.

The ageing of the carer population, in particular, signals the need for developing long-term strategies.



## Pathways to strong, supportive partnerships with families and carers

**Pathway 1** – Understand the life stressors facing families and carers and assist them to maintain good physical, mental and emotional health.

**Pathway 2** – Recognise the diverse experiences and needs of families and carers, including those from Aboriginal and culturally diverse backgrounds, and ensure supports are available to meet their needs including:

- physical and emotional health care
- a range of practical in-home and out-of-home services
- financial support.

**Pathway 3** – Provide greater certainty and peace of mind for families and carers:

- through information and assistance to plan, in particular at times of transition, for example from school to work, and from living in the family home to other accommodation
- by helping families and carers to make informed choices from a range of support options and respecting the choices made
- by facilitating access to information and flexible supports and services when they are needed, particularly in times of pending crisis and as family members and carers age

- by facilitating access to individual advocacy to help families and carers clarify and speak out for what they need.

**Pathway 4** – Promote links between different families and carers and links with community networks as valuable sources of information, emotional support and leadership development.

**Pathway 5** – Ensure families and carers have choice about whether or not to engage in paid employment by making sure the financial and practical supports and services needed by their family member with disability are available.

**Pathway 6** – Value and support the important commitments and interests that families and carers have in other areas of life, for example young carers maintaining social networks, sport and education.

**Pathway 7** – Support families and carers who wish to develop leadership and self-advocacy skills.

## Priority Area: Responsive approaches in rural and remote areas

### People who participated said...

People living in rural and remote areas of the State (need to) receive equitable, appropriate services and supports that allow them to remain living in their communities.

There is a sense that it is too hard in rural and remote areas and therefore less than the best is okay.

Services need to go to where Aboriginal people live.

Transport and equipment needs to be established in remote environments such as wheelchairs that work in sand.



# Count Me In

It is important for people living in metropolitan areas, in particular those who develop disability policy and service approaches, to understand the unique demographic, geographic, climatic and social features of rural and remote areas and the impact on providing responsive services. Western Australia is the most vast and diverse State in the country, providing health, education, disability and other services has many challenges.

It must not be assumed, however, that the metropolitan area always has better access and service approaches. Geographic isolation and limited access to service systems can, at times, create the opportunity for innovative local initiatives to fill gaps in supports and services.

These initiatives may end up being funded or remain unfunded and voluntary. As well, partnerships between existing agencies may get stronger as local resources work together. In contrast, however, the availability of services and local solutions in some rural and remote areas falls short in comparison to those in metropolitan locations.



## Pathways to developing responsive approaches for people living in rural and remote areas

**Pathway 1** – Develop flexible, innovative solutions to unique rural and remote issues using a range of strategies, for example:

- investigate and promote the adoption of effective disability-related approaches in rural and remote areas
- develop partnerships between private, corporate and government bodies to improve housing, health, family support, disability and other services
- facilitate local ‘think-tanks’ and other forums for people in rural and remote areas to create local and regional solutions.

**Pathway 2** – Ensure disability services are culturally responsive to the diverse needs of Aboriginal people, for example, by providing cultural awareness training to staff, by employing Aboriginal staff and by encouraging Aboriginal-controlled agencies to provide services or partner disability organisations.

**Pathway 3** – Develop strategies that recognise and address the additional cost of goods, supports and services in rural and remote areas, for example:

- by increasing access to transport by people with disability, their families and carers, for example by petrol subsidies, financial assistance to purchase appropriate vehicles, increased community transport schemes and expansion of accessible and subsidised taxi schemes
- by acknowledging and funding more disability-related travel to Perth or other service areas for people with disability, their families, carers, and service providers.

**Pathway 4** – Extend the reach of metropolitan-based information, supports and services to country areas by:

- developing additional out-reach capacity within Commission services, Commission funded and unfunded services
- utilising communication and web-based technology to complement direct service provision, for example by developing an interactive web facility on disability use of technology, by using videos to demonstrate therapy and by video-conferencing to share information and training.

**Pathway 5** – Promote exchange of expertise between metropolitan, rural and remote areas through:

- encouraging partnerships between rural and remote agencies and metropolitan-based agencies
- resourcing metropolitan-based service providers to deliver supports and services in rural and remote areas
- facilitating collaboration between metropolitan and country organisations in relation to providing information and training for direct care workers, people with disability, their families and carers
- encouraging sharing of information and expertise between different rural and remote areas.

**Pathway 6** – Increase the attraction and retention of qualified workers in rural and remote areas by:

- ensuring that tertiary training of therapists and human service workers includes rural and remote work experience including service delivery to Aboriginal communities
- developing strategies to retain experienced human service and disability staff
- promoting jobs and career pathways in disability services, including for Aboriginal people.

# Count Me In

## Priority Area: Collaborative responses to people with disability who are ageing

### People who participated said...

People are living longer and will have greater expectations of a full and varied life... complexity of needs will increase and the interfaces between sectors will become more complex.

(There will be) ageing baby boomers without primary carers.

With the population ageing there are implications for workforce participation and workforce shortages. There will be decreased availability of family carers and increased pressure on budgets.

The ageing population presents opportunities: as they age people will increasingly expect to remain connected... the ageing of the population will lead to the growth of the same kinds of services as people with disability require.

The West Australian population is expected to increase by about 22 per cent between 2008 and 2023 with most of this increase among people aged 65 or over. People with disability who are ageing and people who acquire disability in senior years face a number of similar issues that may require preventive health intervention, best use of technology, supports to age at home or in 'place', and better design of aged care residential living (see endnote 9).

It is uncertain exactly what this will mean for the uptake of personalised supports and services. At present, approximately one-third of people with disability who are eligible to receive such services do so. This means that two-thirds of those who are eligible for services are receiving the assistance they require from other means, most likely from friends, family and carers. Whether or not people want to access disability services depends on a number of factors including how easy services are to get to and use, how well services match individual and family needs, and the extent to which families and carers are able and willing to provide substantial care. The last consideration is vital as many carers are ageing too.

A major challenge and key priority for Count Me In is ensuring that the interests of an ageing population are met and that they do not compete for scarce resources with those of the younger populations with disability. Cooperative state and national approaches are imperative.





## Pathways to develop collaborative responses to people with disability who are ageing

**Pathway 1** – Develop effective interfaces between disability services, community aged care services, and residential aged care services for older people with disability who live independently, with family or carers, or in supported accommodation.

**Pathway 2** – Develop aged care facilities that cater effectively for people with all types of disability and that provide home-like environments and good opportunities for community access.

**Pathway 3** – Ensure that services for older people with disability are culturally responsive to people from Aboriginal and culturally diverse backgrounds, for example, by acknowledging and assisting those Aboriginal people who wish to return to, or visit, country as they age, and by providing additional support to families of people with disability from culturally diverse backgrounds who wish to continue caring.

**Pathway 4** – Promote active, healthy ageing and ageing-in-place by:

- ensuring that preventive health funding, health programs and lifestyle planning for ageing Australians are also accessed by older people with disability

- ensuring that older people with disability receive services that enable them to remain at home where this is a preferred option for example in-home support, aids and equipment, and ‘change of support’ assessments. Home may be a range of settings including independent living, living with family or carers or living in supported accommodation
- educating disability workers in ways to foster active, healthy ageing
- anticipating and responding to the needs of people with disability who are living longer lives and are likely to acquire other conditions as they age, for example Alzheimer’s disease
- emphasising opportunities for community contribution and participation for people with disability during senior years.

**Pathway 5** – Ensure that people with disability, their families and carers receive specialised help to coordinate, plan and address the many separation issues that arise when older people with disability leave their family home.



# Count Me In

## Keeping the process alive and committed

Participants were asked about how to keep the Count Me In process alive and committed. They warned that it must not just be another plan, another consultation process, another piece of paper. They were also unanimous about what was needed to ensure real change and keep the momentum going over future years.

### Put people with disability, their families and carers in the driver's seat.

- Listen to what people with disability and carers of people with disability have to say – don't do anything about us without us.
- People with disability are the most knowledgeable about the issues and agendas that have the greatest impact on their daily lives. For too long disability services agendas have been the agendas of decision makers and not that of the people with disability.

### Keep talking and really listen.

- Talk with families. It's not rocket science.
- Keep in touch with people and use their stories as levers to identify solutions.
- Listen to people with disability, their families and carers and the non-government sector that services and supports them. Consultation fatigue is for real.

### Be strategic and practical.

- Be strategic and structured in planning with a long-term outlook. Undertake good research. Be solutions-focused. Ensure regular review.
- Focus on what people with disability and their families want, not what looks good on paper. Be visionary but also practical. Remember that quality often lies in the detail for people with disability. We want this plan to provide us with an instrument of change.
- The media is a powerful tool. Let's start using it to our advantage.



Many practical and concrete ideas also emerged, for example:

- Establishing a taskforce within Government with representation from people with disability and from across government and industry.
- Providing regular opportunities for ongoing input into the process with real efforts being made to include the voices of people who are often seen as 'too hard' to engage with.
- Putting Count Me In in a prominent location on the Disability Services Commission website to inform people the project is still in progress.
- Using the Local Area Coordination network to distribute information to their local communities and networks and facilitate the gathering of on-going feedback.
- Using non-government agencies, including unfunded organisations and support groups, to distribute information out to their local communities and networks.

## Core principles

Drawing from participants' responses, four key principles underpin the implementation of Count Me In.

- The strong and central involvement of people with disability, their families and carers in advising and leading developments.
- Commitment to human rights and the Count Me In vision.
- On-going conversations with all stakeholders and other interested people. Intentional listening, mutual conversations, innovative planning and determined implementation are key ingredients underpinned by good will between all stakeholders. People with disability, their families and carers are central to these processes.
- Commitment to a reflective process which tracks progress and responds to changing or emerging trends and the needs of people with disability, their families and carers. Priorities may change as progress is made or other critical issues emerge. Good measures of progress, good detection of emerging needs and trends and the best ways to keep everyone informed are crucial to unfolding Count Me In.



# Count Me In

## Implementing priorities and pathways

The Commission will keep abreast of current and proposed initiatives that directly help to progress the priorities and pathways in Count Me In. Initiatives may be:

- effective elsewhere in Australia or overseas and considered worthwhile to implement in Western Australia
- currently proposed or in operation in Western Australia – coordinated or funded by community groups or networks, the Disability Services Commission or other government or non-government agencies.

In partnership with key players, the Commission will:

- support existing initiatives that progress the work of Count Me In
- build on or extend existing initiatives where needed
- develop new strategies where there are no existing ways to move forward on pathways
- establish ways to track and report progress on each pathway
- develop ways to keep everyone informed and engaged
- keep abreast of new and emerging trends and issues that may need to be addressed during the life of Count Me In.

Everyone will benefit by taking a long-term view of our future and playing a part to develop a Western Australia where everyone is valued and included. Developing a Western Australia where people with disability, their families and carers thrive builds a Western Australia where all people can thrive.



# Endnotes

1. The West Australian population will increase by about 22 per cent to more than 2.55 million people between 2008 and 2023 with the most increase in those aged over 65 years. The total number of persons who identify themselves as having a disability will increase by about 38 per cent by 2023.
2. More than 300 people contributed to the development of Count Me In. Detailed descriptions of the process and all working papers including monographs, a summary of consultations, and summary papers 'Heading in helpful directions' and 'Working at the interface' are available on the Disability Services Commission website at [www.disability.wa.gov.au](http://www.disability.wa.gov.au) or by contacting Strategic Policy on (08) 9426 9200.
3. Data from the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) 2006 Census were used to estimate future numbers of persons with disability and people aged under 65 years who report that they experience profound or severe core activity limitation, that is, the need for personal assistance in self-care, mobility or communication.
4. Universal design emerged from barrier free and assistive technology developments. It aims to create buildings, products and environments that are usable and effective for everyone, not just people with disability.
5. Areas such as justice and health were specifically mentioned in submissions.
6. In relation to people from culturally diverse backgrounds, Western Australia has a highly diverse population including many new and emerging groups. More than one quarter of West Australians were born overseas. More than 200 countries are represented, 170 different languages and more than 100 different faiths. The 10 fastest growing populations from 1996-2001 were Somalia, Sierra Leone, Afghanistan, Oman, Sudan, Iraq, Botswana, Syria, Liberia and Bosnia/Herzegovina.
7. Under the Disability Services Act 1993 (amended), a carer is a person who provides ongoing care or assistance to a person with disability. The term does not cover a person employed to provide care or assistance or while doing community work. The definition is congruent with the meaning of carer under the Carers Recognition Act 2004. Most carers are family members.
8. In 2009, there were 2.6 million carers who provided assistance to those who needed help because of disability or old age. Just under one third of these (29 per cent) were primary carers; that is, people who provided the majority of the informal help needed by a person with disability or aged 60 years and over. Over two-thirds of primary carers (68 per cent) were women aged between 45 and 54 years of age. (Disability, ageing and carers Australia: Summary of findings Table 5).
9. Because of the large increase in the number of older West Australians, the overall incidence of disability is expected to increase substantially in the next 15 years – by about 38 per cent by 2023. Of this group, the percentage of those with profound or severe core activity limitation is projected to increase by around 44 per cent in 2023.





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