Research and Data Working Group (RDWG)
Terms of Reference

1. Background
The Council of Australian Governments’ Disability Reform Council (DRC) has responsibility for implementing the National Disability Agreement (NDA), National Disability Strategy (NDS) and National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS). The DRC Senior Officials Working Group (SOWG) is established to support the decision-making of the DRC. The Research and Data Working Group (RDWG) is established as a sub-committee of the SOWG. It replaces:
- The research functions of the former Disability Policy and Research Working Group (DPRWG) including the Research and Development Steering Committee; and
- The disability functions of the former Research, Evaluation and Data Working Group.

2. Purpose
RDWG is an advisory and decision-making body focused on building and improving the evidence base for policy and practice relevant to the outcomes of the NDA, NDS and NDIS, including those related to carers.

RDWG reports to the SOWG on RDWG activities and decisions regarding research and data activities, and refers any strategic issues for decision as appropriate. The RDWG is responsible for overseeing the work of the National Disability Data Network, a technical forum that works on the Disability Services National Minimum Data Set (DS NMDS).

3. Objectives
(i) Provide strategic and integrated advice, decision-making, analysis and data development decisions to SOWG on data and research activities related to the NDA, NDS and NDIS and jurisdictional carers’ strategies;
(ii) Support research and data that progresses the priorities under the NDA, NDS and NDIS and the National Disability Research and Development Agenda, including carer’s strategies; and
(iii) Encourage collaboration between governments through the sharing of research results.

4. Governance
(i) The RDWG has a decision-making role in terms of research and data activities including data standards and data development activities; and
(ii) The RDWG reports to the SOWG on strategic issues and refers issues as appropriate.

A diagram of the reporting arrangements under the COAG Disability Reform Council is at Appendix 1.
5. **Key Activities**

(i) Contribute appropriately to data coordination and data linkage activities between disability and mainstream services;

(ii) Consider the development and use of the Australian Bureau of Statistics Survey of Disability, Ageing and Carers (SDAC);

(iii) Periodically review the NDS trend indicators as agreed in the National Disability Strategy reporting framework;

(iv) Oversee and consider advice on improvements to the Disability Services National Minimum Data Set (including oversight of the NDDN);

(v) Develop, review and implement disability information management and a national approach to data development strategies;

(vi) Endorse data standards and specifications related to national disability data collections;

(vii) Provide six monthly reports to the SOWG on the work of the RDWG research and data activities, ensuring high accountability and appropriate investment;

(viii) Advise SOWG on the policy outcomes of funded research;

(ix) Liaise with other research and data networks to promote the development of disability relevant data in other service systems;

(x) Advise SOWG on recommendations about any new spending commitments from the National Disability Research Special Account which is held by the Australian Government on behalf of all governments’ disability portfolios;

(xi) Maintain the overall responsibility for the National Research and Development Agenda;

(xii) Constitute a research selection panel as required to appraise research proposals and make recommendations to the RDWG;

(xiii) Final approval of which research grants are approved for funding; and

(xiv) Work in partnership with the Department of Social Services (who manage the Sector Development Fund) and the National Disability Insurance Agency to address NDIS research needs and avoid duplication of efforts.

6. **Membership**

The RDWG comprises of members from Australian, state and territory government agencies. Each jurisdiction is responsible for electing one member and ensuring that the RDWG Secretariat is promptly advised of any changes to their elected member. The elected member must have the authority to make recommendations/decisions on behalf of their jurisdictions across the range of responsibilities of the RDWG.

Members include:

(i) Chair;

(ii) Deputy Chair, to be appointed by RDWG members as necessary depending on RDWG needs;

(iii) One representative from each state and territory;

(iv) Department of Social Services (DSS);

(v) Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW); and

(vi) Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS).
Observers:
(vii) National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA); and
(viii) Productivity Commission.

Observer status may be granted to other government agencies/additional agency staff or interested parties from time to time.

7. Meetings
It is anticipated that four meetings will be held per annum, with additional meetings as required. Out of session work may be required. Where possible, meetings will be held via telepresence or teleconference rather than face-to-face.

8. Chair
The RDWG Chair will be appointed by the SOWG and the Deputy Chair be appointed by RDWG members as necessary depending on RDWG needs. Each appointment will be reviewed annually, or more frequently as required. The Deputy Chair’s role is to manage meetings and RDWG business in the absence of the Chair.

9. Secretariat
Secretariat support for the RDWG is co-located with the Chair and will be reviewed annually. The Secretariat is responsible for providing timely and effective organisational support to the RDWG and the Chair.

10. Research Coordinator
RDWG may choose to appoint a research coordinator to assist with RDWG research functions. The role, tenure, funding allocation and location of research coordinator will be determined by RDWG members.

11. Conflicts of interest
In relation to the procurement of research, members and observers will declare any conflict of interest that might arise and remove themselves from any proceedings in relation to the matter giving rise to that conflict.

RDWG members and observers will provide written declarations of potential or perceived conflicts of interest at a minimum annually. The Chair and other RDWG members will determine the appropriate course of action to address conflicts of interest as they arise.

RDWG members will declare any conflicts of interest, in relation to specific items of business, at the commencement of each meeting. These will be noted in RDWG minutes.

Where members or observers at RDWG meetings are deemed to have a real or perceived conflict of interest, the Chair will make a determination on the appropriate course of action.

Where the Chair or Deputy Chair is the subject of the conflict of interest, a temporary Chair/Deputy Chair may be appointed to lead the discussion on the relevant item(s) of business.
12. Accountability and Reporting
The RDWG is accountable to the SOWG for:
(i) Providing neutral advice regarding research, data and evaluation proposals;
(ii) Providing formal written advice on outcomes of research decisions; and
(iii) Providing twice yearly reports to SOWG (and additional reports as required).

The RDWG will maintain the overall responsibility for the research and evaluation agenda under the NDA and will set the National Disability Research and Development Agenda in line with current research priorities.

13. Confidentiality
Members and observers of the RDWG have an obligation not to use or disclose information provided in confidence, without consent of the Chair, the party who provided the information or as otherwise authorised or permitted by law.

Confidential information provided as part of the RDWG is provided to enable members to perform their responsibilities. This includes information relating to agenda items to be discussed. Members and observers must take all reasonable steps to ensure this information remains confidential and is only disclosed where authorised or permitted by law.

In relation to research or analysis, the sharing of ideas is promoted whilst ownership of existing intellectual property will remain with the relevant individual or organisation.

15. Funding
Funding for research proposals is held in the National Disability Research Special Account.
Appendix 1 RDWG Intergovernmental Committee Flowchart

DRC
Disability Reform Council (Reform Council)
Disability Services Ministers and Treasurers and
the Australian Local Government Association

SOWG
(Senior Officials Working Group)
Disability and Treasury
Departments, RDWA (as officio
advisor)

NDIS Evaluation Steering
Committee
One delegate per state and territory and Australian
Governments representatives (NDIA, DSS, Dept.
Education, Dept. Employment, Dept. Health)

RDWG
(Research and Data Working
Group)
Disability Departments and Data
and Research Agencies

NDDN
(National Disability Data Network)
Disability Departments and Data Agencies