

Analysis of Volume 8 of the Implementation of the DRC



Artwork by artist with disability, Jared Payne

About the Queensland Independent Disability Advocacy Network

The Queensland Independent Disability Advocacy Network (**QIDAN**) is a group of organisations providing individual advocacy services to Queenslanders living with disability. These organisations are funded under the Queensland Disability Advocacy Program (**QDAP**). The member organisations include Aged and Disability Advocacy; AMPARO Advocacy Inc; Capricorn Citizen Advocacy; Mackay Advocacy Inc; People with Disability Australia; Queensland Advocacy for Inclusion (**QAI**); Rights in Action; Yarn2Action run by Aged and Disability Advocacy; Speaking Up For You; and TASC.

QIDAN has three aims:

- Systemic advocacy: coordinated action to address systemic issues experienced by people with disability,
- Member support: a collaborative space for the exchange of information, resources and issues affecting disability advocacy organisations, and
- Sector advocacy: to promote the importance and value of independent disability advocacy on a local, state, and national basis.

The members of QIDAN offer various independent disability advocacy services across Queensland, including general disability advocacy, specialised individual advocacy (including National Disability Insurance Scheme appeals), citizen advocacy and systemic advocacy. QAI coordinates the Disability Advocacy Pathways Hotline ('Pathways') to provide information and referrals to people with disability, their families and supporters.

About the cover artwork

My name is Jared Payne, I am a Barkindji Man from far west New South Wales. The central art pieces are the two hand carved boomerangs for the two areas, the disability sector and the prison system. The Boomerangs themselves represent an ongoing practice of creating

and curating amongst First Nations people regardless of the systemic and political factors that seek to erase this.

The window the boomerangs are placed in is from a 1930's Queenslander house representing the distance between people on the inside and those who are kept on the outer. I have chosen to keep the window unlocked to represent the potential for people to look outside of their world and into others. All you must do is to be willing to try. Open the window, look inside and engage with the carvings. They are made to be picked up, held, thrown, and clapped together. Please don't treat them as fragile because they are not.

The photos in the background contextualise the work and have been taken by me over the last two years in different places on this continent. The man pictured in the bottom left corner is my uncle who has lived with multiple disabilities for many years. After being in a car accident he was told he would never walk again. He was a carpenter when he was young and built himself a set of parallel bars and taught his legs to walk again. The tools I carve with were given to me by him as he can no longer use them.

The writing on the glass of the window reads "we who believe in freedom cannot rest", a quote from African American Civil Rights Activist, Ella Baker, which was amplified by Acapella band Sweet Honey and the Rock. This quote is included as a call to action for those who believe in freedom to fight for it, especially in response to the violence of policing and prison systems.

This artwork is attributed to those living with disabilities, their carers, and families as well as people with experiences of the prison system and their determination and steadfastness in addressing structural inequalities and institutions. The title of the song which carries this quote is 'Ella's Song', paying tribute to my nan, Ella who has spent

decades advocating for people in prisons and for people living with disabilities like my Uncle who she still cares for.

Background

In response to the lack of transparent and meaningful updates on the implementation of the Disability Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People with Disability (**DRC**), QIDAN initiated an independent, self-led analysis of the progress of each DRC recommendation. What started as a review of publicly available information quickly became something much larger, and our findings from the analysis changed the way we think about the governments' commitment to Queenslanders with disability. We decided to turn our analysis into the following report, because we believe that our findings belong to the public. QIDAN have two main intentions for this report:

1. We want it to be a tool everyone can use to independently track the implementation of the DRC recommendations, and to keep up to date with what governments have said and/or done in relation to the recommendations.
2. We want to keep governments accountable.

Since the DRC was first established in 2019, it has had a significant impact on Australia's disability community. The consultation and evidence gathering process involved nearly 10,000 people with disability, their families and their carers, who shared stories of maltreatment, discrimination, and oppression. The incredible strength of those who contributed to the DRC helped to inform 222 recommendations issued by the DRC in its final report in September 2023. All recommendations were made with the intent of reducing and eliminating the risk of maltreatment, discrimination and exclusion experienced by people with disability, and to reach the realisation of equitable rights and genuine inclusion.

Despite the DRC final report being published over two years ago, there has been very little progress in the implementation of the recommendations. In fact, QIDAN discovers in this

report that **only 3% of recommendations have been genuinely implemented**, and 53% of recommendations have no progress we can report on. The lack of action taken by federal and state and territory governments to implement the DRC has significantly impacted the people who shared their experiences with the Commission, and has eroded public confidence that governments are committed to a truly inclusive Australia.

In July 2024, the Australian and Queensland governments released reports detailing their responses to each recommendation made by the DRC, advising whether each recommendation was:

- Accepted
- Accepted in principle
- Subjected to further information
- Noted
- Rejected

QIDAN analysed the reports and noted many of the governments' responses to recommendations were sometimes misleading and did not adequately address the actual intent of the DRC, nor provide strong or clear commitment to the changes the DRC proposed. More information on QIDAN's findings can be found in [QIDAN's Position Paper on the Government Responses to the DRC](#).

Timeline – from the final report to the present

In September 2024, the Disability Reform Ministerial Council (**DRMC**) released a [Disability Reform Roadmap for 2024 and 2025](#) (the **Roadmap**), which provided a brief overview and timeline of the key deliverables for major disability reform pieces, including the DRC, National Disability Insurance Scheme (**NDIS**) reform, Foundational Supports, and Australia's Disability Strategy (**ADS**). The Roadmap clearly stated:

- an interim joint progress update on the DRC was due in December 2024

- the first national implementation progress report was due in June 2025, and
- the second progress report is due in December 2025¹.

It is important to note the first national implementation progress report was only published in late November 2025.

After the Roadmap was published, the Queensland Government committed over \$160 million to disability reform in the Queensland 2024-25 Budget, including investment for the co-designed implementation of the DRC.

In December 2024, the Australian, state and territory governments published a report titled the [National Interim Update 2024](#). The stated intention of this short report was to provide a “snapshot” of the work governments are doing on certain recommendations².

However, as we

will discuss throughout our report, the activities described in the National Interim Update 2024 report do not adequately meet the intention of the recommendations made by the DRC. The report also reiterated “All governments have agreed that biannual reporting arrangements will commence from June 2025”³.

Following the National Interim Update 2024 report, there was very little communication from the governments about the DRC for most of 2025. The first meaningful update on the DRC was mentioned in the [DRMC Communiqué](#) dated 6 June 2025, which stated Ministers “reiterated their commitment to the implementation of the joint government’ response to the Disability Royal Commission recommendation as a priority for the DRMC and agreed to endorse the Biannual report out of session by the end of August 2025”⁴. QIDAN believe this is a reference to the first national implementation progress report. This report was not released in August. Then, on the 30th of July 2025, an updated [Disability reform roadmap](#) was published.

In October 2025, QIDAN reached out to Queensland's Minister for Disability to ask when the report will be published, and the response received from the Minister offered no information on its status nor due date.

Finally, on 27 November 2025, governments released the [Disability Royal Commission Progress Report 2025](#), providing federal and state-based updates on each recommendation⁵. Upon review of this report, QIDAN was disappointed by its lack of genuine updates, especially from the Queensland Government.

Alongside the DRC Progress Report 2025, The Queensland Government released a new and updated version of the [Queensland Government Response to the DRC](#), changing the Queensland Government's position on several recommendations⁶. In fact, the Queensland Government reduced their commitment for two recommendations, and altered their supporting commentary for 37 other recommendations. Some of the changes that concern QIDAN include:

- Recommendation 4.30 (b) regarding vilification because of disability, which was originally accepted in principle but subsequently changed to subjected to further consideration.
- Recommendation 8.16 regarding enabling First Nations organisations to support First Nations peoples with disability in custody, where the Queensland Government originally stated in their response that they accepted the recommendation "to ensure First Nation peoples in custody or under supervision are managed in a culturally sensitive and culturally safe manner"⁷. The response was then altered to remove this sentence⁸.
- Recommendation 9.1 regarding culturally appropriate parenting capacity assessments, which was originally accepted in full by the Queensland Government but subsequently changed to accepted in principle.⁹

It is crucial to note QIDAN could not find any press from the Queensland Government prior to releasing the updated version of its response to the DRC, and the changes made in the new response paper are not clearly identified within the new response document. Though QIDAN do note that the DRC Progress Report 2025 contains several statements about the updated Queensland response, the statements are scattered, inconsistent, and are not made on every relevant recommendation. This means that QIDAN only learned of all the content changed by the current Queensland Government by performing a side-by-side comparison of the original and updated response reports. Covertly changing and downgrading commitments to certain recommendations sets a dangerous precedent, and QIDAN will monitor any future updates made by the Queensland Government.

QIDAN's ongoing commitment to the Disability Royal Commission

QIDAN intend for this analysis to be an annual exercise, and we hope to publish this type of report annually to keep our communities up to date. For this analysis report, QIDAN used information that is publicly available. In many cases, this meant reviewing media statements, articles, reviews of policies and strategies, announcements of reviews into policies and strategies, amendments to legislation, information on consultations, and information from government websites. We use the following terms to indicate how far each recommendation is in the implementation process:

- **Rejected:** The government/s responsible for implementing this recommendation has shown they have no intent to implement it.
- **No Update:** The government/s responsible have either made no public comment regarding implementation of the recommendation, have made no clear attempt at implementation, or the attempt has been cited by the government/s for the recommendation does not actually align with the recommendation.
- **Beginning stages:** The government/s responsible have started a review, plan or program that will inform the future implementation of the recommendation, but no further work has occurred.

- **In progress:** The government/s responsible have implemented a review, plan or program aligning with the recommendation. The government/s may also have started pilot projects or other initial steps that will likely lead to full implementation in the future.
- **Implemented:** The government/s responsible have implemented the recommendation in line with the DRC's intention.

The process of analysing the implementation of the DRC recommendations was challenging and time-consuming. For QIDAN, it put into perspective how difficult it would be for the every-day person to try to keep up to date with the DRC. Often, the updates we discovered were not directly attributed to the DRC, meaning QIDAN had to use discretion to decide whether an action taken by government or other body truly reflected the intent of a DRC recommendation. Because our analysis is based on what is publicly available, and our own discretion, it may not reflect the most recent developments. In an effort to ensure we present accurate information sections of this analysis were provided to relevant Government Departments and agencies prior to release to offer an opportunity for feedback on any publicly available information we may have missed or misrepresented.

QIDAN is committed to promoting and defending the rights of people with disability, and we are hopeful the implementation of the DRC will eliminate the conditions leading to Australians with disability being targeted by violence, abuse, neglect and exploitation. The disability community deserve to play an active role in the disability reform, and QIDAN strives to ensure the DRC is not forgotten.

Volume 8: Criminal justice and people with disability

Volume 8 focuses on the criminal justice system, and the significant overrepresentation of children, young people and adults with disability in the system. The recommendations in volume 8 aim to address the disproportionate harm experienced by people with disability

in the criminal justice system by making suggestions around improving the conditions for people with disability in custody, deterring the use of indefinite detention and solitary confinement, as well as other recommendations focusing on safeguarding and the reduction of harm within the system.

Recommendation 8.1: Conditions in custody for people with disability

Responsibility: State and territory governments

Response: Accept in principle

Update: Beginning stages

Recommendation 8.1 recommends states and territories uphold the rights of incarcerated peoples with disability in line with the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (**CRPD**). The Queensland Government's Department of Youth Justice Interim Disability Service Plan 2026 – 2026 (**YJIDSP**) mentions that the plan aligns with Queensland's obligations under the CRPD but doesn't provide specific references to the CRPD. As we are yet to see how the Queensland Government uses the YJIDSP and the CRPD to uphold the rights of incarcerated peoples with disability, this recommendation is in the beginning stages of implementation.

Recommendation 8.2: Disability awareness in OPCAT monitoring

Responsibility: Australian, state and territory governments

Response: Accept in principle/subject to further consideration

Update: No update

Recommendation 8.2 recommends the Australian Government, in collaboration with state and territory governments, improve disability awareness in the monitoring and implementation of the Optional Protocol to the Convention Against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment (**OPCAT**). The recent United Nations Universal Periodic Review of Australia focused on Australia's failure to implement the OPCAT, urging the governments to ensure all fundamental legal safeguards are guaranteed "both in law

and practice”¹⁰. Despite this, QIDAN found no evidence of any progression of this recommendation.

Recommendation 8.3: Prohibiting solitary confinement in youth detention

Responsibility: State and territory governments

Response: Accept in principle

Update: No update

Recommendation 8.3 recommends the prohibition of the use of solitary confinement in youth detention. Concerningly, the Queensland Government considers this recommendation completed, stating Queensland already protects against the use of solitary confinement, further describing circumstances in which separating and isolating incarcerated children and young people is allowable¹¹. QIDAN note although the Queensland Government does not use the term ‘solitary confinement’ to describe practices of separating children and young people for extended periods of time (including periods of 22 hours and over), solitary confinement does indeed occur in youth detention centres and watch houses and described in by the Queensland Ombudsman in their combined inspection report¹². Furthermore, Professor Tamara Walsh’s forthcoming report ‘Solitary Confinement of Unsented Children in Queensland Watchhouses, and Why It Might Be Unlawful’ aligns with the findings of the DRC and demonstrates how it can be argued solitary confinement of children is indeed occurring in watchhouses, and many of the principles of this argument can be applied to youth detention settings. With this in mind, there are no updates on the implementation of this recommendation, and QIDAN notes its disappointment in the Queensland Government for marking this recommendation as being complete contrary to evidence, research, and ample testimony of children and young people who have experienced solitary confinement.

Recommendation 8.4: Screening and assessment for disability in youth detention

Responsibility: State and territory governments

Response: Accept in principle

Update: Beginning stages

Recommendation 8.4 regards the need to improve disability screening and assessments in youth detention. The Youth Justice and Victim Support Disability Service Plan 2026 – 2027¹³ directly addresses this recommendation, mentioning screening and assessment services are planned to be rolled out by December 2026, except for North and Far North Queensland which is scheduled for December 2027.

Recommendation 8.5: Disability training for staff in youth detention

Responsibility: State and territory governments

Response: Accept

Update: Beginning stages

Recommendation 8.5 recommends youth detention staff receive ongoing training on working with children with disability. Both the DRC Progress Report 2025¹⁴ and the Youth Justice and Victim Support Disability Service Plan 2026 – 2027 (YJVSDSP) refers to the development of a Neurodevelopmental Disability Framework, as a response to providing ongoing disability training for staff. However, the YJVSDSP states the training is for on-boarding staff only despite the recommendation specifying ongoing training. The Disability service plan also contains an action to “continuously update disability awareness training options on a range of topics pertaining to disability and intersectionality”. However, QIDAN note that e-learning disability modules will be non-mandatory¹⁵. QIDAN is disappointed that disability training courses are non-mandatory.

Recommendations 8.6 – 8.10 – Western Australia, New South Wales and Northern Territory Youth Justice systems

Recommendations 8.6 to 8.10 were not directed at Queensland, so there are no updates applicable. However, it should be noted QIDAN supports these recommendations and calls for similar changes to be implemented within the Queensland context.

Recommendation 8.11: Information for courts and legal practitioners

Responsibility: Australian, state and territory governments

Response: Accept in principle

Update: Beginning Stages

Recommendation 8.11 proposes that information about reasonable adjustments and accessing supports and services should be available throughout the criminal justice system. In April 2026, Queensland's Department of Justice initiated the 'Consultation on court and tribunal users with disability' in direct response to recommendation 8.11¹⁶. The consultation is gathering feedback by the end of May 2026, and the Department of Justice have noted that feedback will "inform the next steps of the Courts and Tribunal Accessibility project"¹⁷. This is a positive first step in implementing this recommendation.

Recommendation 8.12: Implementation of the National Principles

Responsibility: Australia, state and territory governments

Response: Accept in principle

Update: Beginning stages

Recommendation 8.12 calls for revision of the National Statement of Principles Relating to Persons Unfit to Plead or Not Guilty by Reason of Cognitive or Mental Health Impairment (**the National Principles**) by the Standing Council of Attorney-General. In their 2025 update, the Australian Government mentions the Attorney-General has since done a "desktop analysis" to inform this review, also offering the review of the National Principles is included in a 2025 working plan¹⁸. Unfortunately, there has been no update from the Queensland Government. This recommendation is in the beginning stages.

Recommendation 8.13: Data about people detained in forensic systems

Responsibility: Australia, state and territory governments

Response: Accept in principle

Update: No update

Recommendation 8.13 asks for the collection and publication of data relating to people who are found to be unfit to plead guilty or not guilty by reason of cognitive or mental health impairment. In the DRC 225 Response Report, the Australian Government refers to an initial scoping exercise through existing data sharing forums¹⁹. QIDAN does not consider initial scoping work to be a meaningful update on recommendation 8.13.

Recommendation 8.14: National practice guidelines for screening in custody

Responsibility: State and territory governments

Response: Accept

Update: No update

Recommendation 8.14 recommends nationally consistent practice guidelines for screening for disability in custody be developed and implemented. Though the Youth Justice and Victim Support Disability Service Plan 2026 – 2027²⁰ proposes implementing disability screening tools in line with the DRC, there is no mention of what the Queensland Government is doing to ensure that approaches are nationally consistent. Furthermore, there appears to be no mention of developing nationally consistent screening tools in adult corrective services.

Recommendation 8.15: Policies and practices on screening, identifying and diagnosing disability in custody

Responsibility: State and territory governments

Response: Accept in principle

Update: No update

Recommendation 8.15 asks state and territories to ensure policies and practices related to screening and diagnosing disability are consistent with the national practice guidelines proposed in recommendation 8.14. As the National practice guidelines are yet to be developed this recommendation cannot progress.

Recommendation 8.16: Support by First Nations organisations to people in custody

Responsibility: State and territory governments

Response: Accept

Update: No update

Recommendation 8.16 regards the need for states and territories to engage with First Nations organisations in the development of culturally safe disability screening and assessment services for First Nations incarcerated peoples. There are no updates on the implementation of this recommendation.

Recommendation 8.17: NDIS Applied Principles and Tables of Support concerning the justice system

Responsibility: Australia, state and territory governments

Response: Subject for further consideration

Update: No update

Recommendation 8.17 calls for the review and improvement of the NDIS Applied Principles and Tables of Support, with a focus on the intersection between disability and the criminal justice system and improving access to disability-related supports of people who are incarcerated. In their initial responses, both governments indicated they did not firmly commitment to implementing this recommendation, and there has been no progress.

Recommendation 8.18: Timing of NDIA-funded transition supports

Responsibility: Australian Government

Response: Accept

Update: Beginning stages

Recommendation 8.18 calls for the NDIA to issue guidelines clearly stating an incarcerated person's release date is not a precondition for the NDIS to approve funding for transitional support. The NDIA has amended their justice operational guideline and removed reference to release dates²¹, completing part of this recommendation.

Recommendations 8.19 – 8.20 Amend the *Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (Cth)* and improve police responses

Responsibility: Australian Government, state and territory governments

Response: Accept in principle

Update: Beginning stages

Recommendation 8.19 and 8.20 regard police responses to people with disability, including amending the *Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (Cth)* to acknowledge police services under the definition of ‘services’, and developing and implementing strategies to improve police responses. The Attorney-General’s Department has begun a review into the *Disability Act 1992*, and the [Queensland Disability Service Plan 2023 – 2026](#) sets a framework for improving police responses to people with disability. However, there is little information available to track whether the framework has been implemented and whether it has been successful or not.

Recommendation 8.21: Diversion of people with cognitive disability from criminal proceedings

Responsibility: State and territory governments

Response: Accept in principle

Update: Beginning stages

Recommendation 8.21 recommends developing and implementing court-based diversion programs for people with disability charges with summary offences in local or magistrates’ courts. The DRC Progress Report 2025 mentions a pilot disability stream for adults in the Brisbane Magistrates court.²² However, with no available data the effectiveness of this pilot is yet to be seen.

Recommendation 8.22: Age of criminal responsibility

Responsibility: State and territory governments

Response: Do not support

Update: Rejected

Recommendation 8.22 recommends states and territories raise the age of criminal responsibility to fourteen. Controversially, this is the only recommendation explicitly rejected by the Queensland Government. This decision by the Queensland Government was made despite considerable evidence supporting the need to raise the age of criminal responsibility, and the ongoing advocacy of the [Raise the Age campaign](#)²³.

Recommendation 8.23 – 8.24: Address violence against women and children with disability

Responsibility: Australian, state and territory governments

Response: Accept in principle/subject to further consideration

Update: Beginning stages

Recommendations 8.23 and 8.24 call for the acknowledgement of women and children with disability who experience domestic and family violence, and how to improve strategies to reduce domestic and family violence experienced by people with disability. This includes establishing a nationally consistent disability-inclusive definition of family and domestic violence. The DRC Progress Report 2025 mentions a disability lens will be used in the First Action Plan.²⁴ The commonwealth Attorney-General's department is also currently conducting a national review of Domestic Violence Order frameworks. This review was noted as an opportunity to implement recommendation 8.24 ²⁵.

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