

Leave No One Behind

Election resources



Help share and promote our message so that government **Leaves No One Behind!**

The next Australian federal election is in May 2019. We want to make sure the voices of people with Down syndrome and their families are heard during the election campaign.

Down Syndrome Australia (DSA) has listened to people with Down syndrome and their families about what is important to them.

There are eight main issues that need action. We have summarised these below or you can read the full advocacy document on our website at www.downsyndrome.org.au.

Call to action 1: **Prenatal screening**

We want families to have the information they need to make informed decisions about prenatal screening. It is unethical to have a screening program in place without access to good information and support.

Call to action 2: **NDIS**

People with Down syndrome should have automatic eligibility for the NDIS and must get the services and supports they need once they are in the scheme.

Call to action 3: **Health inequalities**

People with Down syndrome have the right to the same quality of health care as the rest of the community. Government must tackle the health inequalities that currently exist.

Call to action 4: **Education**

People with Down syndrome have the right to go to the same schools as their peers and be supported to learn in mainstream classrooms.

Call to action 5: **Employment**

People with Down syndrome must be given opportunities to work in open employment. Government needs to address the barriers to employment.

Call to action 6: **Migration**

Government must remove the discrimination against people with a disability in the migration regulations.

Call to action 7: **Sustainable funding for disability-specific peak organisations**

Government must commit to ongoing, recurrent funding for disability organisations to ensure the important role they provide in advocacy and informing government is sustainable.

Call to action 8: **Affordable housing**

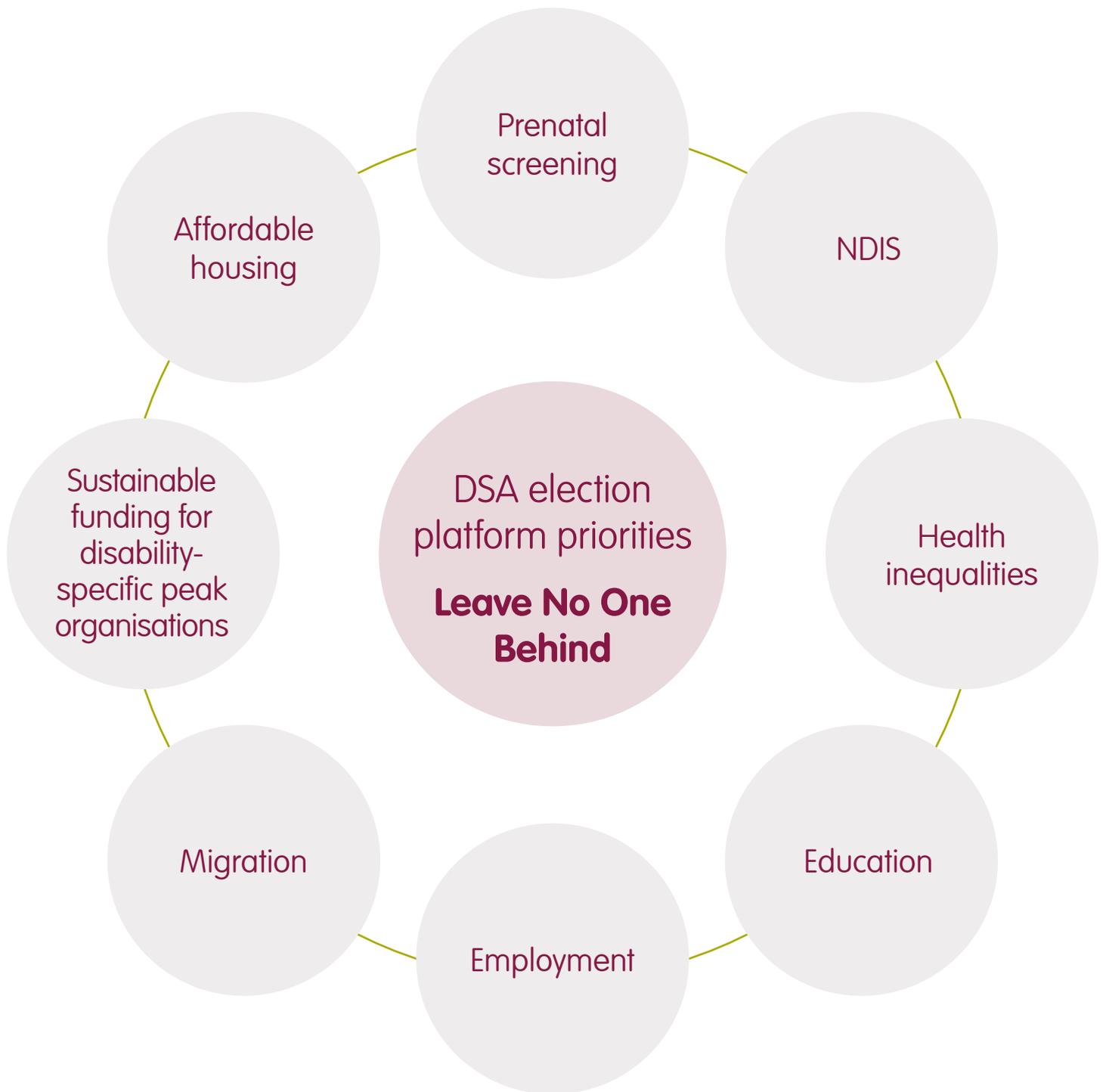
People with Down syndrome need to be able to find an affordable place to live. Government must commit to increasing the supply of affordable housing.

Your voice is important. You can help ensure that members of parliament, who represent your community, know what is important to people with Down syndrome and what they can do to ensure everyone gets a fair go.

The information on the following pages show a number of ways you can be involved in advocacy. We have included some tips to make sure you are as prepared as possible. Thank you for sharing these messages to ensure that no one gets left behind!

Dr Ellen Skladzien
CEO

DSA: Election platform priorities

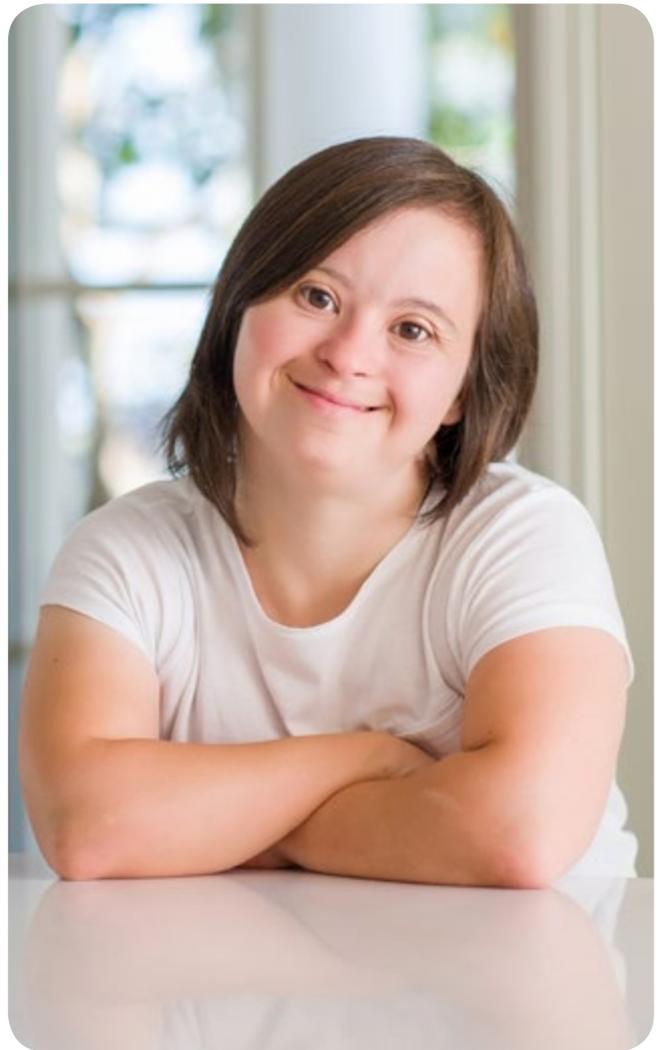


What does it mean to be a self-advocate?

Self-advocacy means speaking up for yourself. It means presenting your own views about issues that are important to you. Some people have a lot of experience speaking up for themselves. Other people might feel a bit nervous about speaking up when they haven't done it before. People can learn and develop their self-advocacy skills over time.

Some tips for self-advocacy are:

- Know your rights.
- Be a confident communicator.
- Communicate clearly in whatever way works best for you.
- Share only the parts of your story that you are comfortable with.
- Find the facts or statistics that show the bigger impact of the issue that you are passionate about.
- Communicate your message with respect.
- Don't be afraid to ask questions if there is something you don't understand.
- Ask for support if you need it.
- Don't be afraid to make accessibility requests so you can participate better or understand more clearly. For example, if you need something in Easy Read, then ask for it.
- Be prepared for meetings, events or phone calls where you will talk about the issues that are important to you. Have your story and points ready to share.



How can I have my voice heard in the upcoming election?

DSA encourages people with Down syndrome, their families and friends to become self-advocates.

Your stories and experiences are powerful. You can help make sure that politicians hear what matters to you and how they can make changes that will help. It doesn't matter if you haven't done this type of thing before. If there is an issue that matters to you and you are willing to share your story, then you can make a difference.

There are many ways you can be an advocate in your area. They include:

- Send a letter or email to candidates.
- Make a phone call to candidates.
- Arrange a face-to-face meeting with the candidates.
- Share the message on social media.
- Share your story with DSA.
- Contact the media to highlight the issues.

Below you will find more information and tips on how you can be involved.

What is a local candidate?

Local candidates are the people who want to be elected to parliament in your area. The area that your local candidates are seeking to represent is known as an electorate. Every electorate has a number of candidates to vote for on election day. If you need help you can always ask others to help you get this information.

How do I find my local candidates?

You can find your electorate by visiting the Australian Electoral Commission at <https://electorate.aec.gov.au>.

You can find the candidates for your electorate for the upcoming election by visiting: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Candidates_of_the_2019_Australian_federal_election

Leave No One Behind: key talking points

These key talking points are the priorities that DSA has identified. You can talk about one or all of these points but, most importantly, choose the points that are important to you. For example, getting a job might be really important to you but other points may not be. The main talking points from the Leave No One Behind resource are:

Call to action: Prenatal screening

Key message: Families accessing prenatal screening are making decisions about whether to continue their pregnancy without having consistent, accurate and balanced information. All families deserve the full story. Don't screen for Down syndrome without telling families what it really means.

How can I have my voice heard in the upcoming election? cont.

Call to action: NDIS

Key message: People with Down syndrome are spending large amounts of money to prove eligibility when they should be automatically eligible. NDIS staff need a better understanding of Down syndrome so we can access the services and support we need through the NDIS.

Call to action: Health inequalities

Key message: There are stark and costly health inequalities for the 450,000 Australians with an intellectual disability with over twice the rate of avoidable deaths and twice the rate of emergency and hospital admissions as other Australians. Everyone deserves access to good health care. Our health counts too.

Call to action: Education

Key message: The Australian education system is not accessible or inclusive. Only 50% of children with Down syndrome are enrolled in mainstream education when the evidence clearly shows better outcomes in this setting for people with disability. Young people with Down syndrome deserve the chance to go to school and learn with their friends. Don't keep us apart in segregated settings.

Call to action: Employment

Key message: Only 11% of people with intellectual disability aged over 15 who receive disability services, work in open mainstream employment. We need better support to get jobs because everyone deserves a place to work.

Call to action: Migration

Key message: The Australian government currently restricts visa applications from people and their family members who have a disability or a health condition which the government says could be a 'significant cost' to the Australian community. Down syndrome should not mean we can't move to a new country just because we have a disability. We deserve a chance to live where we want to live.

Call to action: Sustainable funding for disability organisations

Key message: Disability-specific organisations currently receive less than \$30,000 each per year from government to do their core work – to advocate for our needs and support our voice being heard. We deserve organisations that can give us the information and support we need. DSA and other disability organisations need sustainable funding.

Call to action: Affordable housing

Key message: In 2018, less than 1% of Australian rental properties were affordable and appropriate for people with disability. We need affordable housing for people with a disability.

Leave No One Behind: Writing a letter or email

You can write a letter or an email to candidates in your area to share your experiences as a person with Down syndrome, family member or supporter of a person with Down syndrome. These letters can share your concerns and experiences and could include information about why the issue being raised in your letter is so important.

Tips for letters

- Don't make the letter too long – one page is perfect.
- Introduce yourself in the letter.
- Share your major concerns in the letter clearly. You don't have to include every issue if you don't want. Just include the ones that are important to you.
- Include a link to more information.
- Use our template letter if that's easier for you. If you do use the template, it is important that you make changes so that it is about you and what matters to you.
- Include a copy of DSA's election document, **Leave No One Behind** available at: https://www.downsyndrome.org.au/position_statements.html.
- Give your contact details so the candidate can reply to you.
- Save and keep a copy of the letter for your own records.

Tips for emails

Sending an email is a quick easy way to communicate with another person. Emails are generally shorter and less formal. Some tips to help with sending an email are:

- Include a subject in the subject line – something like 'Important issues for people with Down syndrome' or 'DSA's Call to Action – Federal Election 2019'.
- Introduce yourself and why you are getting in touch.
- Keep your message shorter.
- Add a link to further information about the issues you are raising.



Letter template

Dear Mr/Ms [candidate's name],

My name is [add your name]. I have Down syndrome and live in your electorate. I want to vote in the upcoming election for a candidate that understands the issues that are important for people with Down syndrome and their families.

Down Syndrome Australia has an election document that talks about eight issues that are important to our community. These issues are important to me because I believe that:

All families deserve the full story. Don't screen for Down syndrome without telling families what it really means.

We need services and support through the NDIS and need to be automatically eligible.

We need better support to get jobs because everyone deserves a place to work.

Young people with Down syndrome deserve the chance to go to school and learn with their friends. Don't keep us apart in segregated settings.

Down syndrome should not mean we can't move to a new country just because we have a disability. We deserve a chance to live where we want to live.

Everyone deserves access to good health care. Our health counts too.

We need affordable housing for people with disability.

We deserve organisations that can give us the information and support we need. Down Syndrome Australia and other disability organisations need sustainable funding.

Down Syndrome Australia has an election platform which has more information about these issues and how you can support our work. This is available at: https://www.downsyndrome.org.au/position_statements.html. If you are elected to parliament, I ask that you support our community to make sure that no one is left behind.

Kind Regards,

[Your name and address and/or phone number.]



Email template

Dear Mr/Ms [candidate's name],

My name is [insert name]. I live in your electorate and I have Down syndrome. The upcoming election is important to me. Our election message is Leave No One Behind. I hope that all candidates understand the important issues for people with Down syndrome living in Australia and commit to working with us, if elected, to ensure that we have the same opportunities as our peers without a disability. The issues that Down Syndrome Australia highlights for people like me with Down syndrome are:

- Prenatal screening
- Education access
- Health inequalities
- Employment
- Migration
- NDIS
- Affordable housing
- Sustainable funding for organisations helping to support people with disability to have a voice.

The full Leave No One Behind document is available at: https://www.downsyndrome.org.au/position_statements.html

Please support us and help people with Down syndrome to have the same opportunities as all other Australians.

Kind regards,

[name]

Leave No One Behind: Calling your local candidate

Picking up the phone and talking to your local candidates can also be effective. It means a conversation can take place and questions can be asked and answered. For some people, it may also be easier than a face-to-face meeting.

Making the call:

Most times it will not be the candidate that picks up the phone in the first place. It is likely to be a staff member or volunteer helper. When you talk to them you can tell them:

- your name and where you live
- that you are a person or family member of a person with Down syndrome
- ask to set up a time to talk with [candidate's name] to share your story and some important issues for people with Down syndrome.
- suggest a time that you are free to receive a call back
- write down the response from the person on the phone. This might be the meeting time or whether the person is going to call you back to discuss your issues and when that might be.

Before speaking to a candidate:

- Think about the parts of your story that you want to share. What are the issues for you and what can be done to help you and other people with a disability about the issue?
- Take some notes and write down the points you want to make (see template below).
- Remember to ask for some help if you need it.
- Write down any actions from the meeting and anything that needs to be followed up.
- Thank the candidate for their time and listening.

Phone meeting preparation

My name is:	
Why are you calling?	
What are some important issues you would like to talk about?	
What do you think can be done to help?	

Leave No One Behind:

Meeting in person with local candidates

Meeting with your local candidates can be a great way of saying what is important to people with Down syndrome. Face-to-face meetings allow you to share your story in a more personal way and also gives the chance for the candidate or their staff member to discuss the issues in more detail and ask questions. You may want to involve a support person or see if someone from your local organisation is able to come to the meeting with you.

Setting up a meeting time:

In the lead up to an election, candidates are usually busy campaigning in their local community, so it is essential that a meeting time is arranged.

To help set up a meeting time you can:

- Write down notes so you can be clear during the phone call.
- Ask for the person who can arrange a meeting time with the candidate.
- Explain that you are a person with Down syndrome and explain any accessibility requests you have.
- Write the day and time of the meeting down so you remember it.

It's OK to be nervous!

Preparing for the meeting:

- Take DSA's **Leave No One Behind** Election document with you to leave with the candidate. This is available at: https://www.downsyndrome.org.au/position_statements.html
- Arrange any support you might require for the meeting.
- Be confident in your abilities! You have the lived experience – that is relevant to the issues that will be discussed.
- Ask who will be at the meeting.
- Think about your personal story and what is important to you.
- Write down some key points you would like to make in the meeting (you can use the template below if this helps).
- Write down what you think the candidate can do to help.
- Look at where the meeting location is and the best way to get there.
- Think about accessibility and what support you might need at the meeting.

Leave No One Behind: Meeting in person with local candidates cont.

Face-to-face meeting preparation

My name is:	
Why are you wanting to meet your local candidate?	
What are some important issues that you would like to talk about?	
What do you think can be done to help?	
Meeting time and location	

At the meeting:

- Leave enough time to get to the meeting so you arrive on time.
- Introduce yourself.
- Share as much of your story as you are comfortable with. Explain why the issues are important to you.
- Be respectful and work at building a good relationship with the other people.
- Give the candidate the **Leave No One Behind** document. This is available at: https://www.downsyndrome.org.au/position_statements.html.
- Ask the candidate about what their local priorities are.

- Ask the candidate whether they will support the Down syndrome community if they are elected.
- Thank the candidate and any of their staff members for their time and for listening.

Sometimes you may also see your local candidates at the local shops or at community events campaigning and talking to people from that community. This can also be an opportunity to speak with them about the important issues for yourself and other people with Down syndrome. This is generally a more relaxed conversation as it is in public and the candidate is trying to talk to as many people as possible.

Leave No One Behind: Sharing on social media

If you have social media accounts, sharing and posting on social media may also be a way to reach candidates before the election. Many local candidates will have their own social media pages and accounts so you can 'tag' or link directly to their page.

Social media is a very public space and once something is posted then it can be copied or re-posted widely. Even if you delete the post later there will still be copies of it that exist. So, you need to consider your online safety and privacy at all times. Only post or share something that you are comfortable with and after giving it lots of thought.

Facebook, Instagram and Twitter are the three most common and popular social media platforms, so these are the ones that election candidates are likely to use.

There are a few ways you can use social media to share advocacy issues and engage with candidates. You could:

- Share a post to your own page on Facebook and tag an election candidate in the post. This will mean that the person will see it.
- Ask your friends to share your Facebook posts about these important issues.
- Follow DSA and your state or territory Down syndrome association pages and share any posts on Facebook about the election and tag the candidates in your area.
- Add a photo to Instagram and tag your local candidate if they have an Instagram account.
- Post or share a post on Twitter about the election issues that are important to you.

How to tag on social media

- Type @[the person's name].
- A drop-down list of people should appear – choose the person you want to tag.
- If the person doesn't appear in the list, type their name in the search bar at the top of the website.
- Copy their @[name] from their profile and paste it into your message.

Some important tips to think about before using social media for election advocacy are:

- Understand your privacy settings and who can see any content you post.
- Only share what you are comfortable with sharing.
- Get advice and support before posting if you are unsure.
- Don't respond to negative comments.
- Know how to block users and delete comments.

Leave No One Behind: Contacting the media

The media can include television, radio and newspapers. They all run stories about the election and election issues in the weeks before election day. Sharing your story with your local news channel or paper can also be a way to raise the issues that are important to you.

If you have a story that you are willing to share with the media, then get in touch with Down Syndrome Australia and we can support and help you contact the media. Our contact details can be found [here](#) or email media@downsyndrome.org.au

What next?

Tell us about your advocacy work and which election candidates you have met or talked to. If you meet with a candidate, take a photo and send it to us!

This will help us see where our advocacy work is happening.

We have resources about voting available [here](#).

After the election, set up a meeting or write a letter to whichever candidate wins so you can talk about the issues again and make sure they are still priorities.



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