Siblings australia inc

25 YEARS

for siblings of children and adults with disability/illness

2025 Federal Election Priorities

In the last four years, Siblings Australia has worked with more than 50,000 siblings who have benefitted from our programs and supports. Over that timeframe, we have also worked with in excess of 500 organisations nationally to provide guidance and support them in providing whole-of-family care.

Siblings Australia is the only organisation in the country to focus on siblings of children and adults with disability or chronic illness. For 25 years, it has developed a national and international reputation for its work with families and the professionals who support them, through its programs, supports, advocacy and research.

Research consistently demonstrates that, unsupported, siblings can suffer adverse mental health outcomes which can leave them in need of additional support; or can disengage from their families, removing vital supports and safeguarding for people with disabilities or chronic illness.

Economic modelling shows that, conservatively, **Siblings Australia delivers $28 of community benefit for every $1 invested which equates to an annual community benefit of at least $19,643,800 in saved NDIS and other health care costs.**

In 2020, Siblings Australia received funding through the Department of Social Services Information, Linkages and Capacity Building (ILC) Grant. This was the first significant funding allocation to Siblings Australia in its 20-year history to that time, despite years of support and advocacy for families across Australia and representation at an international level. With this ILC funding, Siblings Australia were able to expand its services and support exponentially.

However, sibling specific supports are often overlooked in both policy and practice. Funding for Siblings Australia has previously been project-based, which has not provided scope for the level of growth/impact that could have been achieved, despite the clear return on investment that siblings support delivers.

The disability sector is undergoing a series of massive reforms at present. There are two components of this reform particularly pertinent to siblings: foundational supports, and safeguarding.

Foundational supports

Siblings are a vital part of foundational support for people with disabilities, offering consistent, lifelong connections that complement formal services. As natural allies and advocates, they provide emotional support, help navigate systems and contribute to decision-making. Including siblings in foundational support frameworks strengthens family resilience, ensures holistic care, and acknowledges their unique role in safeguarding and enhancing the quality of life for their brother or sister with a disability. Empowering siblings through education, resources, and peer support also fosters their capacity to contribute effectively and sustain their own well-being.

Safeguarding

Engaged siblings provide a natural safeguard for people with disabilities by offering lifelong advocacy, emotional support, and a trusted connection. Their involvement helps ensure consistent care, enhances decision-making through a deep understanding of their sibling's needs, and promotes accountability in service provision, fostering stability and protection throughout their sibling's life.

But it's not just siblings of people with disabilities we support – it's also those with mental health conditions or chronic illness. Our remit is significant.

Siblings Australia encourages both major parties, and independent candidates, to consider the needs and roles of siblings in formulating their 2025 election policies.

Specifically, we ask that commitments are made through:

1. **Embedding sibling support in the foundational supports framework**
   Recognise siblings as a critical part of informal support networks and fund programs that address their unique needs across the lifespan, including ongoing support for Siblings Australia's proven programs.

2. **Implementing long-term funding cycles**
   Move away from short-term, project-based funding to long-term funding which allows for the development, delivery, and evaluation of effective sibling support programs, noting that there does remain a place for project-based funding. However, core funding for organisations such as Siblings Australia, who have demonstrated their effectiveness, expertise, and need, is critical.

3. **Expanding access to digital and local solutions**
   Provide funding for Siblings Australia to continue to invest in and develop further digital tools and locally focused delivery models to ensure equitable access to quality supports for siblings in all regions.

4. **Educating siblings on rights-based practices**
   Provide support for Siblings Australia to continue to expand their programs focused around education on supported decision-making, disability rights, and empowerment to equip siblings to advocate effectively and constructively.

5. **Recognising siblings' roles in aged care transitions**
   Address the growing reliance on siblings as older carers transition into aged care, ensuring siblings are supported in taking on these roles through the work of Siblings Australia; and provide appropriate recognition within the system that siblings are shouldering this work.

With the sibling relationship often the longest of any, the potential for this to be rewarding for both the sibling and person with disability plays a huge role in well-being, social inclusion, and safety over a lifetime. If the sibling relationship breaks down, the potential losses for the person with a disability and their sibling can be huge – and in turn, can leave everyone in need of even more support.

Siblings 25 YEARS australia inc
for siblings of children and adults with disability/illness

siblingsaustralia.org.au

info@siblingsaustralia.org.au

08 8253 4936