Request for Proposal – National Disability Research Agenda

August 2020

National Disability Research Partnership

# 1. Introduction

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| Project title | National Disability Research Agenda |
| Reference | NDRP Research Agenda |
| Expression of interest due | 17:00 AEST 28 August 2020 |
| Contact officer Please note that all communication and correspondence relating to this RFP must be in writing and directed through the nominated contact listed here. | Please note that proposal responses and questions should be submitted to this email address:  Name: Tessa de Vries  Email address: info@ndrp.org.au |

# About the National Disability Research Partnership

The National Disability Research Partnership (NDRP) aims to facilitate a collaborative, translational research program through partnerships between academics, people with disability, their families and carers, peak advocacy and consumer groups, governments and service providers to conduct cutting-edge policy-relevant research that enables people with disability to participate fully in society.

Seed funding provided by the Commonwealth Government is intended to initially establish and demonstrate the value of a national partnership. The goal is to create a longer-term partnership model that will enable Australia to build capacity and conduct high quality research that helps provide solutions to the many policy and practice challenges in disability policy, service delivery and mainstream services.

Further information about NDRP is available at <https://www.ndrp.org.au/>

**Context**

Australia has seen unprecedented change in disability policy over the last decade with the introduction of the National Disability Insurance Scheme and the National Disability Strategy (with a new Strategy due to be released later this year). However, research funding and capacity has not matched investment in policy. [The Audit on Disability Research in Australia](https://www.dss.gov.au/disability-and-carers/audit-of-disability-research-in-australia) revealed significant gaps in research and concluded that research in this field is often small scale, fragmented, poorly integrated into policy and practice and not fit for purpose. The Audit showed there is a need to rapidly scale up research capacity.

COVID-19 and the 2019/2020 bushfires and floods have clearly highlighted existing inequities for people with disability, their families and carers which need urgent policy attention. For example, the crises have further challenged the interfaces between disability, health and other sectors such as education and justice. The economic downturn we now face also risks further disadvantaging people with disabilities and their families. It is even more important now to generate evidence to inform current policy responses and preparedness for the future health and economic shocks we will increasingly face.

This is also a time of enormous opportunity as Australia now has some of the best data in the world on which to build disability policy. We have extensive data collected from participants in the National Disability Insurance Scheme and Australia is also investing in the development of an enduring longitudinal National Disability Data Asset, incorporating NDIS data and datasets from multiple levels of government. This is an exciting collaboration which will allow governments to better understand how people with disability are supported through services, payments and programs across multiple service systems.

The Commonwealth Department of Social Services has invested in the establishment of NDRP (hereafter referred to as the Establishment Phase), to be led by the Melbourne Disability Institute together with a working party, for a two-year period.

However, longer term investment in disability research is needed to build knowledge, boost service innovation, solve pressing policy problems and address the issues identified in the Audits on Disability Research in Australia. This longer term investment therefore needs to be underpinned by a comprehensive long term research agenda.

**Social procurement**

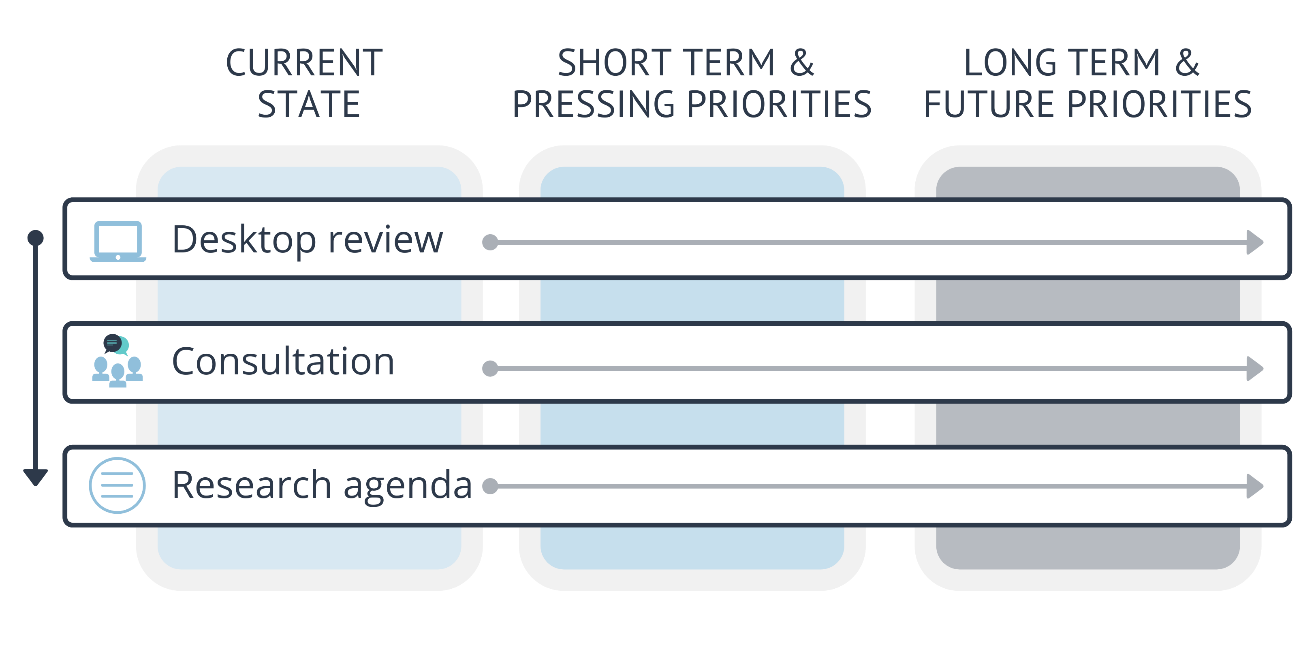
The NDRP has a strong desire to engage with organisations that employ people with disability, Indigenous Australians (including Torres Strait Islanders), as well as disadvantaged community members.

We seek to work with organisations who share our commitment to inclusivity, accessibility, sustainability and social procurement best practice and improvement.

# About this opportunity

A key deliverable for the Establishment Phase is to produce a National Disability Research Agenda (hereafter referred to as the Research Agenda). The Research Agenda should build on existing foundations including current and previous policies, scoping activities and research agendas related to disability research, and the National Disability Strategy, and add to these foundations with broad stakeholder consultations to deliver a 10-year research agenda.

This request for proposal is seeking submissions from consortia of universities and advocacy organisations to deliver the National Disability Research Agenda. All consortia must include at least one advocacy partner organisation in a meaningful and substantive way, and outline how it intends to involve people with disability throughout the project.



## Project aims

The goal of this project is to deliver a 10 year Research Agenda for the NDRP that will see disability research contribute to significantly enhancing the lives of people with disability, their families and carers through policy and practice. While some of the priorities of the Research Agenda will be immediate and pressing, the Agenda must also be forward looking with the vision of significantly enhancing the quantum and quality of Australian disability research. Ultimately the goal is for research to play a central role in shaping policy for people with disability in the future.

The 10 year Research Agenda will ideally address existing and emerging priorities, ‘quick wins’ as well as systems-level research and put forward a long-term vision to deliver policy-relevant research that advances the rights of people with disability and enables them to flourish.

The Research Agenda is intended to cover policy-relevant disability research across all aspects of life and the life course. It will take into account the broad range of contexts in which people live their lives (e.g. work, home, community), mainstream and disability services and supports and policies. It will also cover the diversity of experiences of people with disabilities, their families and carers including (but not limited to) Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians, migrant and refugee communities and Australians in regional, rural and remote regions.

The Research Agenda will inform decisions about research projects and initiatives to be funded through the NDRP.

## Research agenda focus

The 10 year Research Agenda has a social research and policy focus. It is intended to produce evidence and translate knowledge that improves outcomes and inclusion of people with disability in all aspects of community life.

The following areas are in scope for research topics within the Research Agenda:

* Research into improving quality of life for people with disability
* Research that improves the ability of people with disability to participate in community life
* Research into practice and policy improvement
* Research into systems of support for people with disability their families and carers
* Research that improves service delivery and interface issues between specialist and mainstream services

The following areas are not in scope:

* Medical research into causes of disability.

## Framing documents

This project is intended to build on and further develop existing work. A range of projects and documents have produced knowledge, put forth research priorities and highlighted gaps that should be collated and built on. As such the Research Agenda should review and build on recent and existing activities related to disability research including, but not limited to:

* Audit of Disability Research 2014 and 2017
* The 2011 National Disability Research Agenda
* United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disability
* Commonwealth, State and Territory government research agendas (including the Disability Reform Council, National Disability Insurance Agency and National Quality and Safeguards Commission)
* Recommendations made about disability research emerging from Australian government inquiries or Royal Commissions
* Large Australian research initiatives and centres such as the Cooperative Research Centre in Autism
* Living Our Ways: An Aboriginal Disability Research agenda led by First Peoples Disability Network

The Research Agenda should recognise the role of research in achieving the goals of the Second National Disability Strategy, and acknowledge the research infrastructure of the National Disability Data Asset (NDDA)[[1]](#footnote-2).

## Tasks and Deliverables

The project will involve three different tasks and four deliverables including a synthesis of the current state of disability research and identified priorities; consultation with stakeholders to shape the Research Agenda; and a final Research Agenda that will underpin the activities of the NDRP going forward. All tasks should consider (1) current state of research, (2) short-term and emerging priorities, and (3) forward-looking, long-term priorities to position the NDRP as a significant contributor to new knowledge and evidence that enables people with disability to flourish.

It is anticipated that the Research Agenda project will involve the following key tasks and deliverables:

1. **Report on the current state of disability research in Australia and horizon scan**

A desktop review of current literature and knowledge related to disability research in Australia should draw on the above framing documents and any other existing literature. This report should begin to identify themes emerging from the literature, and start to separate these into immediate, medium and long-term priorities. The report should compare emerging themes with past and current research recommendations and identify where there is alignment and where gaps remain. A horizon scanning exercise should be undertaken to detect early signs of potentially important developments and future priorities.

This document will form the basis of the stakeholder engagement process.

Deliverable 1: Report on current state of disability research in Australia and emerging outcomes of horizon scan.

1. **Consultation with key stakeholders** to table results of the desktop review and horizon scan, and seek feedback on current state of disability research, emerging priorities and long-term vision. The stakeholder consultation process should seek the views of a range of groups, including people with disability, their families and carers, advocacy bodies, federal and state governments, universities and research institutes and service providers. The stakeholder consultation should facilitate a variety of ways to seek feedback, being mindful of the current travel restrictions and state of the sector. The consultation process should build on the outcomes of the desktop review and engage stakeholders in discussions to identify whether the emerging priorities are deemed important, and what other research questions should be considered in addition.

Deliverable 2: Consultation schedule outlining various ways to engage with stakeholders

Deliverable 3: Report on outcomes of consultation process.

1. **Research agenda report.** The final report for the research agenda should combine the desktop review with feedback from the consultation process to deliver a research framework and agenda for the NDRP. The report should outline a carefully considered, policy-relevant 10-year research agenda that addresses existing and emerging priorities, ‘quick wins’ as well as systems-level research and a put forward long-term vision to deliver policy-relevant research that advances the rights of people with disability and enables them to flourish. This report will guide the NDRP research program and will inform the selection of topics for two collaborative demonstration projects to be undertaken during the current establishment phase for the NDRP.

Deliverable 4: Research agenda report.

## Project Timeline

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Oct 20 | Nov 20 | Dec 20 | Jan 21 | Feb 21 | Mar 21 | Apr 21 | May 21 | Jun 21 |
| Deliverable 1: Current state report |  |  |  | Due |  |  |  |  |  |
| Deliverable 2: Consultation schedule |  |  |  | Due |  |  |  |  |  |
| Deliverable 3: Consultation report |  |  |  |  |  |  | Due |  |  |
| Deliverable 4: Research agenda |  |  |  |  |  |  | Prelim |  | Final |
| Project control group meetings | \* | \* | \* | \* | \* | \* | \* | \* | \* |

## Funding

The funding available for this project is up to $400,000.

Costs the funding can be used for are:

* Operating and administration expenses directly related to the delivery of services, such as:
  + staff salaries and on-costs which can be directly attributed to the provision of the project
  + support services in the identified service area/s as per the grant agreement
  + telephones
  + rent and outgoings
  + computer/IT/website/software
  + insurance
  + utilities
  + postage
  + stationery and printing
  + accounting and auditing
  + travel/accommodation costs directly related to the Research Agenda project. Please note travel costs will be reimbursed on receipt of invoices/receipts
  + assets that can be reasonably attributed to meeting agreement deliverables
  + screening processes for paid, unpaid and sub-contracted staff (such as working with children check)
* Appropriate and sufficient payment to advocacy organisations and people with lived experience of disability who are involved in the project.
* Inclusive and accessible stakeholder engagement processes.

## Governance

The project will be overseen by a NDRP Project Control Group, made up of a subset of the NDRP working party. The Project Control Group will meet regularly via teleconference with the project team to provide support and discuss emerging themes.

# About this RFP

By submitting a response to this RFP, you agree to be bound by the terms and conditions set out in this section and the response requirements within the enclosed schedules. The RFP includes two stages: an expression of interest which outlines the applicant’s partnerships and skills, followed by an invitation to submit a full proposal.

## Submission timeline

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| Stage | Date and Time |
| Release RFP | 13 August 2020 |
| Clarification period: questions accepted | 13 – 21 August 2020 |
| Expressions of interest due | 5pm AEST 28 August 2020 |
| Shortlisted respondents invited to full application | 2 September 2020 |
| Full application due | 5pm AEST 25 September 2020 |
| Interviews (if required) | 30 Sep - 1 Oct 2020 |
| Award notification and commence contracting | 5 October 2020 |
| Commencement of project | 23 October 2020 |

## Submission process

The submission process has two parts: (1) expression of interest and (2) invitation to submit full proposal.

**Expression of interest**

Applicants are invited to submit an expression of interest to outline their consortium and relevant experience. The expression of interest seeks responses to:

* Proposed partnership: which organisations will be part of the consortium (must include at least one advocacy organisation).
* Capability: outline relevant experience in similar desktop reviews, facilitating inclusive consultations and research agenda setting.
* Approach: brief outline of the proposed approach to the project.
* Accessibility and inclusion: outline experience in co-design, accessible communication and inclusive research.

The response template is attached at **Appendix 1** and responses should be no more than three (3) pages.

**Full proposal**

Shortlisted applicants will be invited to submit a full proposal outlining their proposed approach and budget. The full proposal will include:

* Executive summary
* Outline of partnership: organisations in consortium and overview of how they will work together
* Proposed method: for desktop review, consultation and delivering research agenda report
* Capability: relevant experience, summary of investigators and project staff and ability to deliver project within proposed timeline
* Budget: outline of cost

Proposals should be provided in a separate document addressing the above five criteria. Proposals should be as concise as possible and be limited to no more than ten (10) pages, excluding any relevant attachments or appendices to your Proposal.

Submissions are only accepted via email. Hard copy submissions will not be accepted.

## Eligibility

Applications are encouraged from consortiums which must be led by a university or research institute and include at least one advocacy organisation.

Definitions of eligible organisations:

* University: an institution of higher learning providing facilities for teaching and research and authorized to grant academic degrees
* Research institute: an organisation whose primary purpose is the production of new knowledge (research)
* Advocacy organisation: an organisation whose primary purpose is to advocate on behalf of the interests of a disadvantaged person or group to promote, protect and defend their welfare and justice.

## Evaluation

Proposals will be evaluated against the following criteria:

* Methodology: methods proposed are appropriate and robust
* Capability: Proposed consortia holds relevant skills and experience
* Inclusivity: Evidence of strong commitment to inclusive research and co-design
* Accessibility: Evidence of commitment and experience in facilitating accessible consultation and communication methods
* Pricing: Proposed budget is appropriate and has costed the components appropriately, particularly partnerships with advocacy organisations and inclusive stakeholder engagement.

## Terms & conditions of this RFP

Successful suppliers must comply with terms and conditions stipulated by the Department of Social Services (DSS) and the University of Melbourne:

* DSS Departmental Policies\*;
* the relevant Guidelines\*;
* the Data Exchange Protocols\*; and
* any other service compliance requirements applicable for the Activities you are funded to deliver.

\*Any or all of these may be amended by DSS from time to time. If DSS amend these they will notify us and we will notify you in writing at least one month prior to the changes coming into effect. The latest version can be found on the DSS website [www.dss.gov.au](http://www.dss.gov.au). You must ensure that cultural and linguistic diversity is not a barrier for people targeted by this Activity, by providing access to language services where appropriate.

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| Definitions “Agreement” means the Agreement, to be entered into between the successful Respondent and UoM “Closing Date” means the date and time specified as such in the schedule;  “Confidential Information” means all information relating to a party’s (“Disclosing Party”) business, computer systems or affairs and includes all:   1. trade secrets, know-how, scientific and technical information; 2. product, customer, marketing or pricing information; and 3. information about that party’s customers,   concerning this RFP and the all communications concerning or arising out of the RFP, which the Disclosing Party has already disclosed (or will disclose) to the other party (“Receiving Party”) whether orally, electronically, in writing or otherwise, but excluding all such information which:   1. was in the public domain before the disclosure of the information was made; 2. is placed in the public domain other than by the Receiving Party acting without the Disclosing Party’s prior authorization; or 3. lawfully came into the Receiving Party’s possession otherwise than as a result of a disclosure in breach of an obligation of confidence owed by someone (including the Receiving Party) to the Disclosing Party;   “Evaluation Criteria” means the detailed criteria as set out in Section 6 to this RFP that will be used to evaluate the compliance and/or relative ranking of Proposals.  “Project IP” means the Intellectual Property which is developed or discovered in the course of conducting the Project.  “Proposal” means the written submission to this RFP and any subsequent clarifications made by the Respondent pursuant to and in accordance with these RFP Conditions.  “Request for Proposal or RFP” means this invitation and the RFP document issued by UoM to each Respondent to submit a Proposal in accordance with these RFP Conditions  “Respondent” means a company or consortium that submits a Proposal pursuant to this invitation.  “RFP Conditions” means the terms and conditions that govern this RFP process.  “Requirements” means the indicative scope of work required to be carried out by the Service provider as set out in Section 5.  “Services” means the provision of the products and / or services outlined in the Requirements section of this RFP.  “Service Provider” means the successful entity that is ultimately appointed by UoM and who enters into an Agreement with UoM to provide the Services.  “University of Melbourne” or “UoM” means The University of Melbourne, ABN 84 002 705 224, a body politic and corporate established in 1853 and constituted under the University of Melbourne Act 2009 (Vic) of Grattan Street, Parkville, Victoria 3010. Communication Respondents must direct all matters regarding this RFP to the Contact Officer as outlined in section 1 of this document.  Respondents may seek clarification up to the date and time provided in section 4 Bidder requests for clarification or information deadline. Any communication directly related to the RFP with any other party at the University during the RFP process may render your proposal invalid and disqualify you from any further evaluation.  No questions relating to anything other than the process and the requirements outlined in this RFP document will be addressed.  The University may or may not, in its absolute discretion, communicate any information that is provided in response to a potential supplier’s inquiry, to any other potential suppliers. Indicative RFP timeline Except for the Closing Date and time, the timetable for the conducting of this RFP process is indicative and provided for convenience only. The timetable is contained in section 4 of this document.  The University may specify or undertake additional activities. Response requirements Please ensure that you read and fully understand the RFP. Failure to comply with all of the requirements may mean that your proposal cannot be considered by the University.  Respondents must include in their proposal a full and complete response to all schedules referenced in section 4 above. Failure to complete any of one these schedules may result in your proposal not being considered.  By submitting your Proposal, you will be deemed to have agreed to the terms and conditions of this RFP. Closing and lodgement Proposal responses must be received no later than the date and time provided in section *4 RFP closing time* (submission deadline).  The University may extend the time for lodging Proposals at its discretion at any time prior to the Closing Date by giving written notice of the extension to all Respondents Late submissions Late submissions will **NOT** be accepted unless exceptional circumstances can be demonstrated and is at the sole discretion of the University of Melbourne.  Submissions received after the closing time will be recorded as such, with the date and time of receipt and the documentation will be returned to the sender. Late submissions will only be opened to identify a business name and address.  A failure of the Vendor’s delivery/transmittal system (courier, electronic network, etc.) does not constitute grounds for the acceptance of a late submission. Evaluation of Proposals The University is not bound to accept any Proposal in response to this RFP and reserves the right in its absolute discretion to vary, suspend or abandon this RFP.  The University may reject your Proposal if it does not comply with the RFP terms and conditions and will evaluate compliant Proposals received in accordance with the Evaluation Criteria of this RFP. The University may request further clarifications from selected Respondents prior to finalising its short lists for proceeding to full application and/or interview.  UoM has absolute and sole discretion in relation to the evaluation of Proposals, the selection of a preferred or successful Respondent and the RFP process. In particular, UoM:   1. May accept one or more Proposals, or negotiate with one or more preferred Respondents; 2. May accept the whole or any part of a Proposal, and may accept a Proposal either conditionally or unconditionally; 3. Is not bound to accept any Proposal or to enter into an Agreement; 4. Reserves the right to accept non-conforming Proposals; 5. Is not under any obligation to enter into discussions with Respondents in relation to the rejection of a Proposal or give reasons for accepting or not accepting any Proposal  Validity of Proposals Your Proposal must remain valid for a period of ninety (90) days following the Closing Date.  You may not amend your Proposal after the Closing Date except with the University's prior written consent. The University is not obliged to receive further information, whether written or oral, from any Respondent concerning their Proposal, after the Closing Date. Confidentiality The Respondent covenants to keep confidential, (and ensure its Employees keep confidential), and not to disclose (and ensure that its Employees do not disclose) Confidential Information otherwise than as permitted by this RFP.  The Respondent:   1. may disclose Confidential Information for the purposes of supplying the Goods; and 2. may disclose Confidential Information only to persons who have a need to know (and only to the extent that each has a need to know) and have been directed by the Respondent to keep such Confidential Information confidential.   The Respondent's obligations of confidentiality do not extend to information that (whether before or after the date of this Agreement):   1. is public knowledge (otherwise than as a result of a breach of this Agreement); or 2. the Respondent is required by law to disclose.   The Respondent must comply with any instructions issued by the Nominated Officer in relation to Confidential Information. Lobbying Any Respondent who attempts to exert influence on the outcome of the Proposal process by lobbying, directly or indirectly, any University staff **will be disqualified from the process.**  A Respondent who offers University staff anything that, in the opinion of the University could undermine the impartiality of the proposal process, and/or could create an actual or a perceived conflict of interest (including but not limited to offers of gifts, hospitality, and favours), **will be disqualified from the process**. Intellectual Property The Respondent agrees that all rights in Intellectual Property developed, made or discovered during the course of this Agreement, whether during or outside business hours, in connection with the delivery of the Project or in any way affecting or relating to the business of UoM will belong to and be the absolute property of UoM.  UoM will grant to the Respondent a non-transferable, royalty free, non-exclusive right to use the Project IP for the sole purpose and only to the extent necessary to:  (i) carry out the Project; and  (ii) undertake non-commercial research and education.  The Respondent acknowledges that under its agreement with the Commonwealth UoM must grant to the Department of Social Services a permanent, non-exclusive, irrevocable, royalty-free licence (including a right to sub licence) to use, reproduce, publish, and adapt the Project IP, but not to commercialise any Background IP.  To the extent that a licence to the Project IP or a party’s Background IP is required by UoM to discharge its obligations under the Funding Agreement (including reporting), the Collaborator grants to UoM a permanent, irrevocable, royalty-free, non-exclusive licence (with the right to grant sub-licences) to such Project IP and Background IP for such purpose. Expenses You will fully bear your own expenses in preparing and negotiating over your Proposal. You will not seek to hold the University responsible for any claims if the University rejects your Proposal, or terminate the RFP process, whether for costs or damages incurred by you in preparing your Proposal, loss of anticipated profit in connection with any final Agreement, or any other matter whatsoever. Payment The University’s trading terms are to pay trade accounts 30 days from the end of the invoiced month. Acceptance of a University purchase order by a supplier indicates acceptance of these terms. Proposal Process Feedback Procedure It is the University’s objective to ensure that all participating vendors are given proper opportunity to submit a response. Should any vendor feel that it has been unfairly excluded from the process or has been unfairly disadvantaged, the vendor is encouraged to write to:  NDRP Project Manager at [info@ndrp.org.au](mailto:info@ndrp.org.au). Any feedback will be considered and responded to by NDRP Directors. Disclaimer All information in relation to this RFP provided by UoM, whether in the RFP Documents or not, is provided in good faith to assist the Respondent to assess and respond to the RFP. UoM makes no representations or warranties regarding the accuracy or completeness of the information.  Each Respondent must make its own enquiries about the information provided and shall be deemed to have satisfied itself as to the correctness and sufficiency of this Request for Proposal. If the Respondent finds any discrepancy, error or omission in this RFP document, or its Proposal after its submission to UoM, the Respondent must notify UoM in writing of such discrepancy, error or omission immediately.  The Respondent acknowledges that UoM is not liable for any loss, damage or expense suffered by a Respondent as a result of any inaccuracy or inadequacy in any information it provides to the Respondent or any reliance on such information by the Respondent. |

# Form of Agreement

Refer to **Appendix 2** – 38848 Agreement subcontract template

1. <https://www.dss.gov.au/disability-and-carers-research-and-data/the-national-disability-data-asset> [↑](#footnote-ref-2)