

Potential Unification with Diabetes Australia: a national conversation

Background

ADS has been a member organisation of [Diabetes Australia](#) since the 1980s along with the Australian Diabetes Educators Association (ADEA), Diabetes NSW & ACT, Diabetes Queensland, Diabetes Victoria, Diabetes Tasmania, and the Kellion Diabetes Foundation.

Recently, some of these members (Diabetes QLD, Diabetes NSW/ACT) formally asked Diabetes Australia to consider unification with their members, if and when their members choose to unify. To enable this, Diabetes Australia's members voted unanimously to approve a proposed change to Diabetes Australia's constitution.

The change also allows for other member organisations to consider unifying. Several member organisations are now having a conversation with their members about the possibility of unifying. ADS is actively participating in this national conversation with ADS members, the [Australian Diabetes Educators Association](#) and Diabetes Australia.

What does 'unify' mean in this context?

To formally unify with Diabetes Australia means different things for different member organisations.

For those organisations that choose to unify, Diabetes Australia would be the 'parent' organisation.

For ADS and ADEA, it would mean becoming an independent **subsidiary**. If ADS and ADEA choose to unify, each would be an independent subsidiary of Diabetes Australia, and ADS and ADEA would be 'sister' organisations. Read more below about what it means to be a subsidiary.

We have broken down the detail here

For ADS, we would maintain our own National Council, staff, office and functions. Our ADS brands, training, education and grants/research programs and other member services would remain the same.

ADS would still have a constitution, and members would still vote for the National Council and any changes to our constitution. We would still hold AGMs and host the [Australasian Diabetes Congress](#) (ADC).

We would continue to advocate to Government on policy issues; and run training and educational workshops and other core business as usual. Our mission would remain the same, to serve both our members and people living with diabetes.

ADS would have the option of support from Diabetes Australia including IT systems, finance, HR and other operational support. It may open opportunities for new projects and reduce duplication between the organisations that choose to unify. There would also be many benefits of facilitating a united voice and a stronger voice on policy issues that we already agree on and work together on.

What are the potential benefits?

We already work very closely with other member organisations such as the Australian Diabetes Educators Association. We speak with other member organisations on a daily basis, to encourage

consistency and collaboration. Unification would make it simpler for us to align our policy, advocacy and project-based efforts, reducing double up and presenting a unified voice.

We all work towards the same mission. Unification has the potential to create the one powerful voice that could help improve diabetes research, management and education services and make a real difference to people living with diabetes and their families.

A national conversation

This national conversation can happen without ADS, but as we were invited to take part we want to be at the table and we want to ask you, our members, for input and perspective.

At the moment, the conversation is about how all diabetes organisations can work more strongly together for the betterment of people living with diabetes. At this stage it is only a conversation and ADS has not agreed to anything.

The changes to Diabetes Australia's constitution allow flexibility for each member organisation to participate and decide in their own way.

Who will decide?

Members will have the final say on any decisions.

We are facilitating a conversation about this so members can make an informed decision.

We want to hear your thoughts and questions. How can we help you to participate?

ADS conversations through 2021

We will be available to discuss possible unification and you can contact us any time via email or phone to ask questions or pass on your input.

We ask you to consider the options, ask questions and give your input through our **communications channels**, and Q&A webinars.

ADS business as usual

These discussions have not and will not detract from the work of the ADS National Council and staff, being the voice of the profession and advocating for change in current sector issues, like CGM.

How will a decision be made?

This will occur at a future general meeting of members: either an AGM or an Extraordinary General Meeting. ADS Members have the final say on any decisions.

The ADS National Council is committed to acting transparently and ethically to members, while these national conversations are taking place.

You can email our ADS CEO, Sof Andrikopoulos via ceo@diabetessociety.com.au

More information

The ADS will continue to communicate to members with updates on the conversation with Diabetes Australia's member organisations in the monthly newsletters.

This is a lot to absorb. How do we start this conversation? What's the timeframe?

This conversation has just started. We're conscious that members will need time to absorb the information, ask questions and consider unification before deciding.

There's no rigid timeframe or deadline for a decision to be made. We will be guided by members, but we hope to facilitate a healthy discussion that moves forward and works toward a decision.

Some members of Diabetes Australia have already taken steps to unify, others have just started considering it among their members.

Significantly, we are working closely with the **Australian Diabetes Educators Association** to keep our communications aligned, and to stay in tune with the sentiment of both our memberships.

We will soon host a **live Q&A session** for members from both organisations, and jointly hosted by our CEO Sof Andrikopoulos, and the CEO of the Australian Diabetes Educators Association, Susan Davidson.

One suggestion we have is that members consider working towards a possible vote at the next AGM in August.

We are dispersed throughout Australia – how can we have this conversation together?

At this early stage, we feel that written information is limited in how it can help.

You will receive an invitation soon to the **live Q&A session** for members of ADS and ADEA, which will be jointly hosted by our CEO Sof Andrikopoulos, and the CEO of the Australian Diabetes Educators Association, Susan Davidson.

This will be held online and announced via email and social media. It will be recorded and available to watch later, if you cannot attend. Members will be able to email questions through beforehand, or ask them 'in person' at the live online meeting.

Other ways you can participate:

The best way is to:

- Sign up for the live online Q&A session when it's announced, send through a question, or watch later if you cannot attend
- Check your inbox for newsletter updates
- Check [this page](#) for the latest info
- **Contact us with feedback or questions:** ceo@diabetessociety.com.au

The detail

What does unification mean for ADS? Will ADS still exist or disappear?

Diabetes Australia would be ADS' 'parent' organisation. 'Parent' organisations have a legal responsibility to act in the best interest of their subsidiaries, and subsidiaries have a legal responsibility to act in the best interest of their 'parent' organisation.

Many organisations are structured in this way. The subsidiaries operate in their own right, with their own brands, own Boards and own management, under the umbrella of the 'parent' organisation.

Non-profits (like ADS, ADEA and Diabetes Australia), although non-profit, can be structured in the same way. For example:

- The national Heart Foundation, where each state organisation is a subsidiary
- St Vincent de Paul has a subsidiary, VincentCare, which provides a range of services to people experiencing or at risk of homelessness, the provision of care for seniors and employment support to people with a disability
- The Australia Red Cross has a subsidiary, Australian Red Cross Lifeblood (formerly the Australian Red Cross Blood Service), which is responsible for the collection and distribution of blood and related products in Australia.

How would it work?

If ADS was to unify it would not be merged into Diabetes Australia's operations, but would become a **subsidiary** of Diabetes Australia.

In the case of Diabetes Australia and ADS (and other subsidiaries), this means that there would be much stronger integration of policy and advocacy activities, as well as management and working arrangements.

The subsidiary would remain 'ADS'.

ADS would maintain its own:

- Brand and identity
- Constitution
- National Council
- CEO and staff

If unified, ADS would continue to:

- provide the same services
- manage ADS income and expenses
- set standards, provide training and education services to its members
- manage the ADS brand and voice on behalf of, and guided by its members.

Members would still:

- become a member as usual
- attend training programs/workshops, educational activities and apply for the Society's grants and awards
- vote for the National Council and changes to the ADS Constitution
- have standards and guidelines: these would still be managed by ADS.

Potential advantages of unification with Diabetes Australia

- A united diabetes movement will have a **more powerful voice for policy and advocacy**. The unified organisation will have stronger national influence and impact.
- **Less duplication and more consistency** across diabetes organisations, creating efficiencies.
- There is the **potential for significant efficiencies and cost savings for ADS** e.g. better bargaining power for contracts, access to shared and better IT systems and website platforms than the individual organisations can afford. This means **more funds for member services**.
- ADS and ADEA would have **stronger voices within Diabetes Australia** with: nominated ADS and ADEA Directors on the Board of Diabetes Australia, and the establishment of a Health Professional Advisory Council. The Health Professional Advisory Council would directly advise the Diabetes

Australia Board on matters relevant to diabetes health professionals. All members of the Health Professional Advisory Council would be ADS and ADEA nominees.

- **ADS and ADEA would have a stronger voice in diabetes research**, with ADA and ADEA representatives being appointed to the Board of [Diabetes Australia Research Ltd](#). This would give ADS and our members input to policies and plans for the annual research grant program and other research funding and activities.

What are the disadvantages?

- The Board is not rushing the process, we are still considering the pros and cons, and in particular we are seeking member questions and feedback to ensure members are informed.
- We have not identified any significant disadvantages at this stage.

What if unification doesn't work – can we change our decision?

We will seek an exit clause so that if unification doesn't work for ADS and its members then ADS can withdraw without financial or other costs.

Costs to ADS to date

- As a member organisation of Diabetes Australia, ADS has a seat on Diabetes Australia's Board and has been involved in discussions on unification in these Board meetings.
- ADS' own National Council has also discussed what unification might mean for the diabetes sector and for ADS in particular.
- ADS is working very closely with ADEA in discussing and considering the pros and cons of unification, as there are many areas common to both (as both are health professional member organisations)
- Very little financial cost has been incurred and these relate to legal advice and communications planning advice, and these costs (approx. \$5,000) are jointly shared by ADS and ADEA.

How will unification impact ADS' relationship with organisations that are not members of Diabetes Australia (e.g. Diabetes WA, Diabetes SA and Healthy Living NT)?

ADS has been a member of Diabetes Australia for several decades. Although the membership of Diabetes Australia has changed during this time, ADS has maintained good relations with all organisations whether members or not. We do not expect this to change with unification.