

# CODERE ! D Dyslexia Network

September 5, 2025

**To: International Dyslexia Association (IDA)**

**Subject: Public Comment on the Revised 2025 Dyslexia Definition**

Dear International Dyslexia Association Steering Committee,

I am writing to provide formal feedback on the proposed 2025 revision of the International Dyslexia Association's definition of dyslexia, currently open for public comment.

Code Read Dyslexia Network Australia commend the IDA for undertaking a rigorous and inclusive process to revisit the 2002 definition. The effort to incorporate lived experience, international perspectives, and current research is both timely and necessary.

However, we wish to raise several concerns about the revised definition and its potential implications for individuals with dyslexia, their families, educators, and advocates.

## **Summary of Key Changes**

The revised definition introduces several notable shifts:

- Removal of the phrase “neurobiological in origin,” without explanation in the accompanying “What’s Changed and Why” document.
- Reframing dyslexia as performance at the low end of a literacy continuum, rather than a distinct category.
- Attribution of dyslexia to an interplay of biological and environmental influences, without clarification.
- Recognition that phonological and morphological difficulties are common but not universal.
- Expansion of consequences to include language development, academic progress, psychological well-being, and vocational opportunities.
- Emphasis on early and ongoing literacy support, rather than diagnostic criteria.

## **Risks Identified**

### **1. Loss of Medical Legitimacy**

Removing the neurobiological framing may undermine access to accommodations and support that rely on a recognised disability diagnosis. This could weaken the basis for funding, intervention, and legal protections.

2. **Omission of Intelligence Reference**

The revised definition does not affirm that dyslexia is not related to intelligence, which was a key protective statement in the previous version. This omission risks perpetuating misconceptions and stigma.

3. **Increased Risk of Parent Blame**

The reference to “environmental influences” as part of the cause of dyslexia—without clarification—may unintentionally shift responsibility toward families. In the absence of a neurobiological anchor or intelligence disclaimer, parents may be blamed for their child’s literacy difficulties, especially in contexts where systemic instructional shortcomings are overlooked.

4. **Shift Toward a Social Model Without Safeguards**

While the move toward a socially constructed model of disability aligns with inclusive education principles, it also risks diluting the clarity and legitimacy of dyslexia as a disability. Without careful messaging, this shift could lead to broader but less precise identification, and increased scrutiny of home environments.

### **Proposed Amendments and Actions**

We respectfully request that IDA consider the following:

- **Clarify the rationale** for removing “neurobiological in origin” and explain how this change aligns with current scientific consensus.
- **Reinstate the statement** that dyslexia is not related to intelligence, to protect against stigma and misinterpretation.
- **Refine the language** around “environmental influences” to prevent misattribution of responsibility and protect families from blame.
- **Ensure safeguards** are in place if transitioning toward a social model of disability, including clear diagnostic criteria and continued access to support services.

### **Next Steps for Advocacy**

We appreciate the opportunity to contribute to this important dialogue and thank the IDA for its commitment to advancing understanding and support for individuals with dyslexia.

Sincerely,



**Amelia Matlock**

Vice Chair

Code Read Dyslexia Network Australia