

Summary Report

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# NDIS Review: Mainstream and Tier 2

Rethinking 'Tier 2' of the NDIS:  
Investing in real inclusion of people with disability.



**DANA** Disability Advocacy  
Network Australia

## What are the problems?

### Discussion paper by Dr Sue Olney

The problems identified in the discussion paper are:

- 1. A decade of no investment in services and supports outside the NDIS**
- 2. Slow progress on social and economic inclusion including in mainstream services**

DANA's engagements on this focus area included surveys, online forums, and written feedback.

## Surveys

### Problems and gaps most impacting advocates and people with disability

The leading problems were:

- Lack of any support without a current NDIS plan (86.96%)
- Flow-on effects of people with disability being unsupported, under-supported, or referred to supports that cannot or do not meet their needs (85.51%)
- Cost of getting support can vary a lot and services may not be available (72.97%)
- People with disability being unsupported, under-supported, or referred to supports that cannot or do not meet their needs, and then needing more support as a result (70.27%)
- Very little support available without a current NDIS plan (67.57%)
- Lack of support to understand support available and connect with providers (64.49%)

The biggest service gaps were:

- Lack of accessible information and awareness of available mainstream supports
- Lack of disability knowledge and awareness of staff working in mainstream services
- Lack of availability of mainstream services available for people with disability, particularly mental health and housing supports, including costs and long wait times for services

73.71% thought that there is less support available in mainstream services since the NDIS started.

### Solutions identified by advocates and people with disability

When asked how services and supports can be more accessible and inclusive, the leading solutions were:

- Connections and coordination with existing disability services, including advocacy
- More training and development for staff on working with people with disability

Engagement confirmed the need for increased substantial investment in services and supports outside the NDIS, and to increase access to mainstream services.

## What we heard

Advocates confirmed many of the findings of the original discussion paper and added specific examples.

### **Problems and gaps most impacting advocates and people with disability**

#### **Since the NDIS started, there has been a significantly less disability supports**

- Inclusive education and after school services
- Centralised disability information services
- Psychosocial disability programs (exp. Partners in Recovery, Headspace)
- Local and community focused programs for diverse people with disability
- NDIS services are not providing the same supports as the services they replaced (housing navigation and coordination)

#### **Mainstream services are inaccessible, unavailable, disconnected, complex and costly**

- Lack of specialised and adequately skilled or trained staff
- “Cherry-picking” people with disability and excluding others (complex needs, non-speaking)
- Costs are out of reach, lack bulk-billing and the Medicare system is not accessible for people with disability

#### **Lack of support for people with disability to navigate and connect to disability supports and mainstream services like health, education and housing**

- No central point for accessible information and resources about available supports and services (Centrelink previously provided forms and social workers)
- Lack of capacity building and education/support guided by lived experience run by people with disability
- Confusion around Local Area Coordinators (LACs) roles and lack of availability and response from LACs
- Reliance on advocacy organisations to assist them navigate complex and disconnected systems

## **ILC is not effective in filling gaps in mainstream services and lack evidence-base for impacts**

- ILC grants are ineffective in building community capacity and community supports
- Gaps persist, placing the burden on advocacy organisations to fill these gaps without the resources to do so
- Lack of data collection and tracking of the impact of ILC grants

## **Lack of interface, connection and coordination between NDIS and mainstream and Tier 2 services**

- People with disability on the NDIS are being pushed to mainstream services that do not meet their needs (Allied health using their limited health plan)
- People on the NDIS trying to access mainstream services are inappropriately referred to their NDIS supports

*“Access to services is minimal for someone with a disability and on a disability support pension. You can't pay to get what you need if you're not on the NDIS” - Victoria Advocate, online forum*

*“This is a whole-of-service issue regardless of whether you're on NDIS or not on NDIS. There's still not enough to be covered because of inadequate funding and pushback between State and Federal and who is responsible for what” - Victoria Advocate, online forum*

*“[T]oo often the conversations that should be happening back of house (around who is funding what) are at front of house and people don't need” - New South Wales Advocate, online forum*

## **What are the solutions?**

### **Coordinated, effective governance supporting community by establishing a Disability Inclusion Agency**

Advocates endorsed the need for a national central agency to address the inclusion and accessibility of disability supports and mainstream services. This agency would be a mechanism to:

- Coordinate and ensure effective governance for people with disability
- Increase knowledge and understanding about people with disability across government and agencies
- Increase collaboration across government departments and agencies, including the NDIA, to remove barriers to access mainstream services

### **Increased investment in inclusions: ten-fold increase in Tier 2 investment**

- Fund advocacy organisations, including those run by people with disability, to deliver information, training, capacity building, access to disability and mainstream supports (including NDIS)
- Increase affordable and accessible housing
- Increase access to Medicare for people with disability and chronic complex medical conditions, such as through a health care card

### **Strengthening the evidence base with citizen science: Evidence-building in real time**

- Increase data collection, tracking and reporting on the needs of people with disability, unmet demand, and cost benefits of early intervention and disability supports

*“We’ve got people that are living below the poverty line that no longer see their GP because they are not bulk billing, so they don’t have the evidence that’s required to be able to get the supports in place.” - Western Australia Advocate, online forum*

*“I think we need to get politicians to review again the cost benefit analysis of disability supports to actually see what we all know is true, that the benefits of a holistic approach and the case management style collaboration and of all services is actually much more beneficial” - Queensland Advocate, online forum*

*“I think something with the authority to be able to go in and say, “This design is not universal, and we are going to help you redesign it and we’re going to help you understand what is a requirement, so it’s not a choice for you to be inclusive of people with disability”, so that there is always somewhere for departments to go to and services to go to and the community to go to, to help with that redesign and that implementation” - Tasmania Advocate, online forum*

*“So a lot of education, I suppose, is the answer in the health care system, a lot more support in that context, so increased staffing and roles to support people who are there and that memorandum of understanding so people have no wrong door and get the support they need wherever they go.” - Victoria Advocate, online forum*  
*“[T]here’s a clear need for innovative, thoughtful and ongoing connection and consideration about how people can be supported to build their networks, maintain their networks and continue to be embedded in community” - New South Wales Advocate, online forum*

## Our solutions

### 3 key solutions to improve disability support and mainstream services

- 1. Establish a Disability Inclusion Agency for coordinated, effective governance supporting community**
- 2. Ten-fold increase in Tier 2 investment**
  - a. Co-design with people with disability
  - b. Broaden access to low-level disability services and support
  - c. Increased access to mainstream services
- 3. Strengthen the evidence base with citizen science and evidence-building in real time**