



What we have heard

Making a submission on solutions

June 2023



Submission questions

This document provides the questions associated with the What we Have Heard report. You can use this as a template to draft your answers or upload this document to [the Have your say survey portal](#).

For each area for improvement we have included questions. We invite you to answer the questions which are most important to you, because 10 years on we need your wisdom and experience to help us find solutions to the key challenges facing the NDIS today.

This report is designed to open up conversations on the topics you have told us affect you most and the ones we have identified as part of our early explorations. We welcome your feedback on what we have prepared, as well as topics you feel need further examination.

Between now and 18 August, we look forward to engaging further with you as, together, we find solutions we can present to governments.

Insert details about who made this submission, or any further information

- [REDACTED]

1. Applying and getting a plan

You have told us that getting access to the NDIS is not simple or straightforward. Once in, planning processes are complex, confusing and stressful, and that there is little trust or confidence in the way decisions are made.

What we want to know now

How can we empower you through the planning process?

Prompts to help you answer this question:

- What does the NDIA need to know about you to make better decisions on whether you are eligible for the scheme?
- What would make access and planning simpler and less stressful?
- How can the NDIA engage better with First Nations Australians, people from culturally or linguistically diverse backgrounds, people who identify as LGBTIQ+, gender diverse people, people with complex needs and people from disadvantaged backgrounds in the planning process?

Insert your response to this question

- Provide and advertise a universal intake advice hotline for information on what services the government provides to support the caller. This access advice line should be wholly serviced by government staff only who are well trained and educated on the services and supports available to Australians. This should be a first point of contact for a person to research and work out a solution pathway to the most appropriate support services for their needs. Hearing about some of the outcomes of the review I heard that NDIS cannot be the only life boat out there for people and I agree with this. It is difficult and confusing when there is so much information out there, scams going on and everyone vying for funding. It would be extremely annoying if a person applied for NDIS only to realise it is not suitable for them and there was other options available and they had spent their time gathering documents and evidence etc. Knowing your options from the beginning from a credible source would make things so much easier and streamlined for people.
- To make planning less stressful it would be ideal for the NDIS planner to have direct contact with the applicant's specialist's medical team. The NDIS planners should be extremely experienced in all high care disabilities.

2. A complete and joined up ecosystem of support

We have observed that support for Australians with disability is not planned, funded or governed as a whole ecosystem. There is not enough support for people with disability outside the NDIS. This is unfair and is undermining the sustainability of the NDIS. Which results in people falling through the cracks and missing out on much needed support.

What we want to know now

What is the best way to provide supports for those not in the NDIS?

Prompts to help you answer this question:

- What services and supports should be available to people with disability outside the NDIS and who should provide them?
- How can governments work better to deliver a joined up system of inclusion and support for all Australians with disabilities (within and outside the NDIS)?
- Should some supports be available to all people with disability and so both in and out of the NDIS?
 - Insert your response to this question
 - Refer to question one answer about a universal intake advice hotline.
 - From my personal experience after being diagnosed with MS in my 20's decades ago I was supported by my GP, specialist and I approached the biggest MS organisation which was MS Australia. If I was diagnosed today I would still reach out to these 3 avenues and they need to be well versed on how to approach and what supports I might need. What I hear and fear sometimes is that just a diagnosis of a chronic condition or an illness is straight away seen as a disability and you are advised to apply for the NDIS. This is annoying because it is missing the first steps of existing support services that are easily available and should be used first. It should be made clear to professionals, people and participants that existing services such as mental health care plans, enhanced primary care plans and medicare should be utilised first before an NDIS plan budget.

3. Defining reasonable and necessary

Lack of a clear, shared understanding of what is considered 'reasonable and necessary' leads to complexity, confusion, conflict and inconsistency.

What we want to know now

How would you define reasonable and necessary, and put it into practice?

Prompts to help you answer this question:

- How can reasonable and necessary be more clearly defined so that there is a shared understanding between participants and the Agency and participants have certainty about future funding?
- What would help you understand how reasonable and necessary applies to you?
- What steps could the NDIA take to make decisions about reasonable and necessary which are more consistent and fair?
 - Insert your response to this question
 - Emphasise that each person with a disability is unique and just because they have an NDIS plan it does not mean they can claim the same expense but look at their own unique individual disability circumstances to work out if it's reasonable and necessary for them. I think there is too much comparison when the levels of a person's disability and diagnosis can vary.
 - It might be reasonable and necessary for a participant to claim physiotherapy but why are some service providers allowed to charge travel when this expense to their business can also be claimed in different ways like their taxation assessments. Not only making it clear to a participant on what is reasonable and necessary but a service provider needs to also be clear what they can invoice and not to double dip on system supports provided to business.

4. Early childhood supports

Early intervention for children is frequently not based on best practice. Not enough support is built around families and helping children to be included in their local community.

What we want to know now

What is the best way to support children with disability and those with emerging developmental concerns?

Prompts to help you answer this question:

- How can supports for children with disability be delivered in ways that lead to better outcomes for children?
- What does good support look like for children living with disability?
- In what settings should that support be provided, and by who?
- What supports or services do families need to help their children with disability thrive?
- How should families with children with disability be assisted and supported to navigate early childhood services?
- What supports for children with disability should be available outside the scheme?
 - Insert your response to this question
 - When NDIS was just starting to roll out in my area I had some connection with my local council and I could see the confusion and the misinformation that NDIS was going to be so big they could start winding back and removing support services they were currently providing because they thought that NDIS would take over for them. This no doubt created gaps and people were left in the lurch from council services that were being taken away. Federal, State and Local governments need to communicate and collaborate together and be clear on what and who provides which supports etc.

5. The support and service marketplace

NDIS 'markets' are not yet working for all participants. The current approach to the market relies too much on competition. Not all participants have access to the supports they need.

What we want to know now

How can the markets be better designed, structured and supported?

Prompts to help you answer this question:

- What needs to be done to ensure the markets serve the interests of people with disability, rather than the other way round?
- What options would help when supports and services are not available in your region?
- What information do you need to understand what good service looks like?
- How could the pricing structure be redesigned to reward outcomes rather than the volume of transactions?
- What would attract and keep workers who have the right skills, value and attitudes?

Insert your response to this question

- Regardless of whether the provider is registered with NDIS or unregistered any provider that services an NDIS participant with their NDIS budget should be subject to audits. Maybe something like what Choice magazine does and reviews businesses it would be good to have NDIA do something similar.
- Readily available and genuine star review ratings for all providers that participants can look at.
- NDIA/NDIS should be looking at how all service providers are advertising and targeting on social media etc. I have seen face book ads that are questionable displaying an I love NDIS badge when they are not registered and can be misleading in their ads. It can give a false impression that they have been endorsed by the NDIA when they display the NDIS purple badge.

6. Measuring outcomes and performance

Better measurement of outcomes and performance would help participants make informed choices, keep providers and government accountable, and make sure the scheme is sustainable. It would also help the NDIS improve over time.

What we want to know now

How should outcomes and performance be measured and shared?

Prompts to help you answer this question:

- How should you, your providers and the NDIA keep track of how your supports help you achieve goals or outcomes?
- How should governments and agencies be monitored to make sure they do what they say they will to support you? Who should perform this monitoring role?
- How should we measure the impact and benefits of the NDIS for the broader Australian community and the economy? How should this information be shared?
- How can we build a system where the NDIS keeps improving based on evidence?

Insert your response to this question

- Mystery and under cover NDIA worker should be visiting and seeing first hand any accommodations where NDIS funding is used to support a participant.
- NDIS/NDIA should talk to and listen to the participants and family members on a regular basis and take what they say seriously.
- Make it very easy for participants, workers and providers to inform NDIS/NDIA with any concerns they may have about services being provided to participants. Establish a well advertised hotline that follows through for participants who have concerns to stamp out inappropriate/ bad behaviour that may be occurring.

7. Achieving long term outcomes

We have observed that there is a lack of focus on achieving long term outcomes relating to participation, inclusion in communities and employment. A good life is one enriched by connections to family, friends and community. These need to be nurtured by the scheme.

What we want to know now

How would you like to build better outcomes into your plans?

Prompts to help you answer this question:

- How can the scheme build goals that nurture connections to local community?
- How can you use your funding to help you connect with friends and family, learn new skills or try new things? What is keeping you from doing that now?
- How can you use your funding to help you prepare for, join, or stay in employment? What needs to changes to make this work better?

Insert your response to this question

8. Help accessing supports

The roles of 'intermediaries' such as local area coordinators, early childhood partners, remote community connectors, support coordinators and plan managers overlap, leave gaps and are confusing.

What we want to know now

What does good service from someone helping you navigate the NDIS look like?

Prompts to help you answer this question:

- What skills and knowledge do you need from someone who helps you navigate the system?
- What (people, systems or processes) would make it easier for you to make informed choices, manage your funding and pay your providers?
- What would make it easier to understand how your funding should or should not be used?
- How should service navigation be structured for those who need to access multiple service systems so that they work together?
 - Insert your response to this question

Maybe a 6 monthly support meeting between all intermediaries agreed by the participant and include the participant if they wish.

The skills and knowledge I would need for someone to have to help navigate the system is for them to have a clear understanding of the participant and a clear understanding of what their NDIS plan can support that participant with.

As a self managed participant I am extremely happy and think it is necessary to have a support coordinator help me. And I feel the support coordinator should have excellent knowledge in the participant's disability as well as the NDIS system to produce best outcomes for a participant.

9. Supported living and housing

Many participants with housing and living supports in their plans still have limited choice in where, how or with whom they live. There has been little innovation in housing and living supports. The supply of specialist disability accommodation is not always meeting the needs of participants.

What we want to know now

How should housing and living options be improved to build a good life?

Prompts to help you answer this question:

- What would help you to make decisions about where, how and with whom you live?
- What are the features of living with people or living on your own that are important to you?
- What information, services or support do you need to feel safe and well supported in your home?
- How should the NDIA make decisions about reasonable and necessary housing and living supports, so that decisions are fair and much less stressful?
- How can housing and living supply responses be encouraged to be more innovative and aligned with participant needs?

Privacy is important when living in shared accommodation so having separate entry/exit to their living quarters would be ideal. Consistency of good quality support workers attending shared accommodation is important to reduce anxiety and they don't have to share their living spaces/days with unknown workers throughout weeks.

In shared accommodation noise levels should be taken into high consideration and solutions like triple glazing windows, sound proof walls and noise barriers should be installed.

If a single provider runs a shared accommodation, they should have the capacity to provide the participant with their own workers and not outsource to agency workers a lot of the time as this only comes with inconsistency for participants.

10. Participant safeguards

We are concerned to learn that the NDIS may not have worked well enough to safeguard all participants, while making sure they can still have choice and control. More can be done to empower participants to keep themselves safe, and ensure systems are working together to improve safety and outcomes.

What we want to know now

How should the safeguarding system be improved for a better NDIS?

Prompts to help you answer this question:

- How can the regulation of providers and workers be used to improve the quality of services and supports?
- How can the NDIS build your capacity and natural safeguards to support you to be safe and get good outcomes?
- What should the NDIS do to get the right balance between your choice and control, the dignity of risk, and supporting you to be safe?
- How can all levels of government work together to prevent harm and promote quality in the supports you receive?
- What can be done to make progress in reducing and eliminating practices that restrict your rights or freedom of movement?

Insert your response to this question

- I have been a self managed participant since 2017 and I think it would be extremely helpful to empower us to easily and quickly identify if a provider is officially NDIS registered. I want to know that the business I am using is genuine, safe, approved by NDIS and must follow NDIS standards. What I would like is a Government platform so I can put a NDIS registration identifier number and it would tell me things like when they registered with the NDIS, when they were last audited and official NDIS comments about the business.
- One of the reasons that NDIS can be hard to navigate is because there are so many businesses out there that advertise with the I love NDIS sticker and it can give a false impression that they are endorsed and know everything about NDIS. You can get incorrect information and it would make me more comfortable if I knew I was using a registered service provider. Whether you're a company, sole trader, partnership or any business who services NDIS participants should be able to get a

registration that is tiered according to their amount of dealings with NDIS participants through the year.

11. Any other information you would like to tell us?

With all the scams etc going on at the moment it is even more important only to share information with trusted authorised people. Therefore I would like the NDIA to be able to identify themselves to me as a participant over the phone without me having to give my private information first to identify myself to them. Maybe when I am set up to become a participant I will give a code word that NDIA can give to me first so they can prove their identity first to me if they have instigated the phone call. Also all NDIA workers who have direct dealings with participants should have a NDIS identity number so everything can be tracked if necessary and as a participant I can keep a record of the workers identification number and what was communicated. Also work with communication carriers to make sure participants know when a legitimate mail, email, phone call or message is sent to a participant.