Cultural and Linguistic Diversity
Strategy

2024-2028

Acknowledgement of Country

The NDIA acknowledges the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples of this nation and the Traditional Custodians of the lands across which our Agency conducts our business. We pay our respects to the custodians of the land on which we work as well as their ancestors and Elders, past, present and emerging.

The NDIA is committed to honouring Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' unique cultural and spiritual relationships to the land, waters, seas and their rich contribution to society.

Artwork 'Belonging' by Charmaine Mumbulla.

CEO's foreword

National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA)

The NDIA is committed to an Australia inclusive of all Australians with disability. Central to that commitment is our responsibility to support people with disability with diverse nationalities, language and customs to deliver the best experience to all NDIS participants from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds.

We have heard from CALD participants and their communities the challenges they've had with accessing and using the NDIS. We know that the NDIS does not always recognise the cultural and language needs of participants. We understand that people with disability in CALD communities face ongoing challenges in accessing the support they need.

We developed this Cultural and Linguistic Diversity Strategy 2024-2028 (the Strategy) to make sure the NDIA delivers better outcomes for people with disability from CALD backgrounds.

The Strategy was developed through co-design. Co-design means we listen and learn from participants, families, staff, providers and community groups. In developing this Strategy we worked together with NDIS participants, CALD and disability sector stakeholders, staff and partners to develop a Strategy that truly reflects the lived experience of our CALD participants and their communities.

The Strategy includes an Action Plan which will guide our implementation. It will monitor and evaluate our progress in achieving the outcomes of the Strategy over the next 4 years. Having this Action Plan in place helps us create change. It makes sure that we are accountable and continue to listen, learn and take on feedback so that we deliver a Strategy that is responsive to the needs of the community into the future.

I am so proud of the work that went into developing this Strategy. However, I want to acknowledge that this is only the start of our journey – there is still lots of work to be done to improve outcomes for CALD participants.

I would like to thank the External Advisory Group (EAG) and the National Ethnic Disability Alliance (NEDA). Your guidance and advice throughout the co-design and development of the Strategy has been instrumental.

Building strong and long-lasting relationships with the EAG, NEDA, the sector and community is a significant achievement for the NDIA. I look forward to working closely together for years to come.

If you were one of the many people from CALD communities who shared your experiences with us – a personal thank you from me. Learning from you has meant that together we are working towards ensuring equity and inclusion for all Australians with disability.

Rebecca Falkingham
Chief Executive Officer

President of the Board foreword

National Ethnic Disability Alliance (NEDA)

The NDIS Cultural and Linguistic Diversity (CALD) Strategy marks a significant milestone in the pursuit of a more inclusive and equitable NDIS. It is a testament to the NDIA's commitment to learning from the past and working together with CALD communities to build a better future. The Strategy examines the barriers that people with disabilities from CALD backgrounds face in accessing and using the NDIS and seeks to remedy them through appropriate and timely action.

Drawing from NEDA's experience and involvement in co-designing the Strategy, I am eager to see its focus remain on delivering tangible, positive outcomes for people with disabilities from CALD backgrounds. The Strategy should remain a dynamic and iterative process, where the National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA) continuously assesses the progress, adapts to changing circumstances and remains responsive to emerging challenges and opportunities.

Most importantly, I am hopeful that people with disabilities from CALD backgrounds will remain at the forefront of this Strategy. Their ongoing engagement will ensure that their invaluable insights and expertise are harnessed to successfully implement and monitor the Strategy and its Action Plan. We at NEDA are committed to working hand in hand with people with disabilities from CALD backgrounds, the NDIA, External Advisory Group (EAG) members and other stakeholders to drive positive change.

Maryanne Cosic
President of the Board

Cultural and Linguistic Diversity
Strategy 2024-2028

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Cover photo: Proud Polynesian singer Tua is creating her best life with the help of her NDIS supports. Read more about Tua's story on the NDIS website.

1. Introduction

Culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) communities are an integral part of Australian society and identity. There are approximately 8 million Australians born overseas, and around 300 languages spoken across Australia.[1]

While 30% of all Australians identify as being from a CALD background, only 10% of participants in the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) identify as CALD. For people from CALD backgrounds, there are unique challenges and barriers in learning about, accessing and using the NDIS.

To improve outcomes for CALD participants, the National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA) committed to developing a new Cultural and Linguistic Diversity Strategy 2024-2028 (the Strategy) and Action Plan.

In developing the Strategy, the NDIA aims to:

- increase access to and participation in the NDIS for CALD communities
- increase use of NDIS plans by CALD participants
- improve experiences with the NDIS, including its processes, systems and staff, for CALD participants and communities.

Photo above: Shortly after migrating from Southern China to Australia, Lin faced a change he'd never imagined – losing his vision. Read Lin's inspiring story on the NDIS website.

1 In this document, 'CALD' refers to people who belong to or identify as being from a different cultural or linguistic background. The NDIA has a separate First Nations Strategy and Action Plan to improve outcomes for First Nations people with disability.

1. Introduction

This Strategy has been developed through co-design. Co-design involved collaboration with people with disability from CALD backgrounds (including CALD participants), their families and carers, peak bodies, disability representative organisations and service providers at every stage of developing the Strategy.

The National Ethnic Disability Alliance (NEDA), a national Disabled People's Organisation, provided ongoing advice about the rights of people with disability from CALD backgrounds. The NDIA also formed an External Advisory Group (EAG) to listen, learn and help to achieve better outcomes for CALD communities. The EAG works with and represents people with disability from CALD communities.

The Strategy aims to address barriers identified through the co-design process. These barriers include:

- NDIS systems, processes and service delivery designs are not inclusive of CALD communities.
- NDIS staff and partners do not understand cultural needs or how to best engage with CALD communities.
- NDIS communications are not accessible and do not reflect diversity in culture and language.
- There is limited availability of culturally appropriate and safe disability support services.
- There is limited data that accurately captures the experiences and needs of CALD participants.[2]

The Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People with Disability (the Royal Commission) also recognises these barriers. The Royal Commission found that the NDIS is 'too complex for many people [from CALD backgrounds] to access'.[3]

The Royal Commission also found that people with disability from CALD backgrounds have less success in meeting the access criteria for the NDIS, are more likely to be exploited and have specific cultural and language needs which the system does not always meet. These challenges were also heard in conversations with NDIS participants during the 2023 review of the NDIS.[4]

The goals and actions in the Strategy have been developed to address these barriers. An Action Plan has also been developed to make sure the Strategy can be carried out and to measure its progress. The Strategy and the Action Plan will be used together to improve outcomes for people with disability from CALD backgrounds.

The Strategy and Action Plan align with the findings and recommendations from the NDIS Review and the Disability Royal Commission.

The Strategy and Action Plan will contribute to building an inclusive and culturally responsive NDIS in line with the objectives of Australia's Disability Strategy 2021–2031.[5]

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2 NDIS, NDIS CALD Strategy 2023-2027 - Discover Phase Report [PDF 279KB], 2022.
3 The Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People with Disability, Research Report - Towards best-practice access to services for culturally and linguistically diverse people with a disability [PDF 1,786KB], 2023.
4 NDIS Review Panel, What we have heard report, 2023.
5 Department of Social Services, Australia's Disability Strategy 2021-2031, 2021.

2. Co-design approach

The NDIA is committed to engaging in meaningful and accessible ways to deliver improved outcomes for people with disability. This commitment means the lived experience of participants and families is at the core of NDIS policy design and implementation.

At the NDIA co-design is a collaborative process. It involves people with disability, their families, their carers and members of the sector working together to design disability supports and services. Key relationships with National Ethnic Disability Alliance (NEDA) and the External Advisory Group (EAG) were important to the co-design of the Strategy. These groups provided guidance and expertise during the development of the Strategy.

2.1 Project governance

NEDA worked alongside the NDIA to develop the Strategy. They provided advice and feedback on the approach and ensured that lived experience and CALD perspectives informed every stage of the Strategy's development.

The NDIA formed an EAG to oversee the co-design of the Strategy. The members were from across Australia. They represented CALD participants, disability groups, CALD groups and other people with specialist knowledge about issues that impact CALD communities.

Photo above: Assistive Technology has helped NDIS participant Haya gain much more confidence in herself because she now feels like she is treated equally. Watch Haya's story on the NDIS website.

The EAG was responsible for:

- ensuring that co-design methods and approaches were accessible so that a diverse range of CALD communities could participate
- providing guidance and support in the planning of engagement activities
- connecting the NDIS with communities and individuals
- endorsing the final Strategy and Action Plan.

A list of organisations that are members of the EAG is in Appendix A.

The NDIA also formed an internal working group. Its members included senior stakeholders within the NDIA. The role of the internal working group was to provide subject matter advice. This group will also provide support with the implementation of the Strategy actions.

2.2 Co-design process

The Strategy was co-designed with people with disability from CALD backgrounds, peak bodies, disability representative organisations, sector representatives, advocacy organisations, service providers and NDIS staff. The co-design process followed the NDIA Engagement Framework.[6]

The co-design process followed 3 phases.

1. **Discover phase** involved understanding the challenges faced by CALD participants.
2. **Develop phase** involved developing solutions with CALD participants and stakeholders.
3. **Deliver and Evaluate phase** involves delivering the CALD Strategy and Action Plan, then monitoring and evaluating outcomes over the next 4 years.

Discover phase

The Discover phase began in October 2021. The purpose of the Discover phase was to understand the challenges faced by people from CALD backgrounds when accessing and using the NDIS. Two workshops, 6 focus groups and 12 one-to-one discussions were held with people with disability from CALD backgrounds, their families, their carers and the EAG.

The challenges heard consistently in conversations with CALD participants were grouped into priority areas. The NDIA and NEDA worked closely together to make sure the goals for the Strategy and Action Plan address these priority areas.

6 NDIS, NDIA Engagement Framework, 2022.

NEDA and the EAG agreed on the priority areas and goals. They then shared these with the EAG through different forums and discussions in early 2022. These priority areas were published in the Discover Report in 2022 and are in Section 3 of this Strategy document.[7]

Develop phase

The Develop phase occurred from October 2022 to October 2023. It involved identifying actions and solutions to address the goals. During this phase people were asked to focus on practical solutions or ideal outcomes for the challenges identified in the Discover phase.

The NDIA worked with over 800 people with disability from CALD backgrounds, as well as their families, their carers and the CALD sector. Providing many different engagement events and activities was important to the NDIA. It ensured people with disability from CALD backgrounds felt supported to share their experiences and ideas to improve the NDIS.

The engagement methods included:

• focus groups
• community conversations
• national stakeholder engagement meetings
• public information sessions.

Individuals and organisations engaged during the Develop phase represented a diverse range of disability types, CALD backgrounds, geographical locations and ages. Among the cultural and language groups represented were:

• new and emerging cultures and language groups (groups that have recently arrived or settled in Australia)
• humanitarian migrants and refugees
• the d/Deaf, deafblind and hard of hearing communities
• the multicultural youth community.

Please refer to Appendix B or a full list of the cultural and language groups engaged.

Focus Groups

Focus groups began in late-2022. They covered 6 topics aligned to the priority areas agreed to in the Discover phase.

Each focus group was co-led by an EAG member and was attended by CALD participants, their families, their carers, sector representatives and subject-matter experts from the NDIA.

In total, 38 people attended the 6 different focus groups. Each group met a total of 3 times.

The aim of the focus groups was to workshop actions and solutions to achieve the goals from the Discover phase.

7 NDIS, NDIS CALD Strategy 2023-2027 - Discover Phase Report [PDF 279KB], 2022.

Community Conversations

Community Conversations occurred in early 2023. These were informal, mostly in-person gatherings with people with disability from CALD communities.

Conversations were facilitated by a trusted member of their community who had an existing relationship with the group. The purpose of these conversations was to hear from people the NDIS does not traditionally engage with well, and those who are less likely to engage online.

Approximately 150 people in total participated in 15 conversations held across the country. The role of the NDIA in these conversations was to listen.

Many of the conversations were spoken in language. In these cases, de-identified transcriptions were then translated into English. The conversations included further discussion on the learnings and actions discussed in the focus groups. This made sure the actions reflected the needs of a greater number of people with disability from CALD backgrounds, their families and their carers.

Information Sessions

Virtual information sessions for the public occurred in February 2023. During these sessions the NDIA shared the findings from the focus groups and community conversations. The sessions focused on how the NDIS could be improved for people with disability from CALD backgrounds.

Attendees included members of the public from across Australia. They were from different cultural and language backgrounds and had lived experience of disability.

Attendees were encouraged to share their feedback, ideas and experiences through email, survey response or the post.

Approximately 500 people attended the 3 sessions. Attendees followed up with 140 written submissions provided through survey responses, emails and post.

An information session was also held for providers. This session was hosted by National Disability Services (NDS). It discussed how the NDIS works for CALD participants, focusing on issues and solutions relating to service providers.

National Stakeholder Engagement

The NDIA invited many organisations to share their feedback through written communications or individual consultations in late 2022.

Individual consultations were held with approximately 20 organisations representing CALD communities across Australia. A list of the organisations that participated in these consultations can be found in Appendix B.

2023 CALD Summit Event

The goals and actions co-designed through all engagement activities were tested with the EAG at the 2023 CALD Summit.

The purpose of the CALD Summit was to discuss, reflect on and refine the proposed goals and actions and identify any gaps or areas for improvement.

EAG Strategy Endorsement

The EAG endorsed the draft Strategy and Action Plan at a final virtual meeting in August 2023.

The EAG endorsed:

- the governance approach for the Strategy
- the plan for monitoring and reporting on the Strategy
- their ongoing role.

Deliver and Evaluate phase

The final phase of the co-design process is the delivery, implementation and evaluation of the new CALD Strategy.

The Action Plan sits alongside this Strategy. There will be ongoing evaluation to ensure the Action Plan is successfully implemented. The Action Plan outlines the evaluation approach to this. The NDIA is committed to co-design. It is also committed to delivering and evaluating the Strategy. By carrying out these commitments, the NDIS can better understand, respond to and deliver for CALD communities.

2.3 Governance and reporting

To achieve the goals of the Strategy, clear governance and accountability structures have been formed. These include transparent and ongoing reporting, monitoring, and evaluation of activities. This will support the implementation of the Strategy. It will also ensure the EAG, the CALD sector and communities receive ongoing feedback.

Governance

The reporting and monitoring approach for the Strategy follows the Commonwealth Evaluation Policy. It includes data collection and progress tracking.[8]

Members of the EAG who were part of the co-design and development of the Strategy will also be involved in how the Strategy is implemented and evaluated. They are responsible for:

- representing the voices and needs of people with disability from CALD backgrounds
- providing information and advice to support the Strategy's implementation
- reviewing and providing feedback on progress and updates.

These responsibilities and the expectations for the EAG are in an updated Terms of Reference. This has been endorsed by the EAG.

The EAG will make sure CALD participants, disability groups, peak bodies and people with specialist knowledge of CALD issues are represented in the implementation of the Strategy.

8 Department of Finance, Commonwealth Evaluation Policy, 2021.

An NDIA internal working group will help with the implementation of the Strategy. This group is responsible for making decisions, coordinating, measuring and reporting on progress against the Strategy's actions.

Reporting and monitoring

The NDIA will provide regular updates to the EAG, the CALD sector and communities to show progress. These include:

- **Annual progress reports** which will outline progress towards the Strategy's actions and outcomes. These reports will include updates on progress measures. They will be published on the NDIS website.
- **Mid-year progress updates** which will provide an overview of progress against each action. This update will be provided to the EAG.

People with disability from CALD backgrounds, the EAG and the CALD sector will continue to provide feedback to ensure that the Strategy and Action Plan stays up to date and that it continues to meet the needs of CALD communities.

As a result, actions, outcomes and indicators may be refined to reflect this feedback. Annual reports and progress updates will detail any such changes.

The Action Plan outlines the outcomes and progress measures for each action, across the short, medium and long term.

'I'm very happy, I feel a lot more confident in what I'm doing. I feel really happy because I can be with people I feel comfortable with, and I can achieve what I want to achieve.'

Priscilla, NDIS participant.
Read Priscilla's story on the NDIS website.

3. Reasons for change

At the beginning of the co-design process, a series of focus groups, group discussions and one-to-one discussions were held with CALD participants, their families and their carers. People who participated shared their experiences and the challenges they faced while accessing and using the NDIS.

The challenges that were heard most often can be found in the Discover Phase Report.[9] This report was supported and endorsed by the EAG.

Photo above: Melbourne teenager and NDIS participant Eshan may be a great drummer, but when it comes to empowering people with a disability, he wants to be the frontman. Read Eshan's story on the NDIS website.

9 NDIS, NDIS CALD Strategy 2023-2027 - Discover Phase Report [PDF 279KB], 2022.

3. Reasons for change

The challenges are grouped into priority areas:

Priority area 1:
Infrastructure

NDIS policies, procedures and systems do not reflect the cultural and language needs of all participants.

The challenges are:

- Australia's disability system and the NDIS are difficult to understand and use.
- NDIS systems and processes do not recognise the cultures, traditions, understanding of disability and family roles that exist in CALD communities.

Priority area 2:
Staff capability

NDIS staff and partners do not consistently deliver services that are safe and inclusive for all cultures.

The challenges are:

- CALD participants, and their nominees, families and carers do not have access to NDIS and partner staff who understand their cultural needs or deliver services in an effective and safe and meaningful way.

Priority area 3:
Accessible communications

Information the NDIA shares is not easy to understand for all cultures and languages.

The challenges are:

- Communications shared about the NDIS are complex. Even when translated in language, they do not always meet the needs of CALD communities.
- The limited ways in which NDIS staff and partners communicate with applicants and participants does not always reflect the ways CALD communities need to be engaged with, or the ways they would like to be engaged with.

Priority area 4:
Markets

There are not enough supports and services that meet the needs of CALD participants.

The challenges are:

- CALD participants are not supported to identify and choose services.
- Service providers are not supported to promote culturally specific, responsive and safe supports and services.

Priority area 5:
Data

The data used by the NDIA needs to be improved to gain a better understanding of CALD participants and the supports they need.

The challenges are:

- The definition of 'CALD' used by the NDIS is not broad enough to properly identify people from CALD backgrounds. It does not fully capture cultural and language characteristics.
- Stakeholders are not aware of publicly available NDIS data about CALD participants, and how to use this data.

The first 5 priority areas helped guide discussions and engagement with CALD communities during the Develop phase.

A sixth priority area, 'Outreach', was included during engagement in the Develop phase.

This priority area was added in response to feedback that the NDIS needs to better support CALD people who are still learning about the NDIS, or don't know about the NDIS yet.

Priority area 6:
Outreach

There are limited supports and services available to reach and connect people from all cultures, languages and communities to the NDIS.

The challenges are:

- Many people with disability from CALD backgrounds are not provided with information that enable them to understand NDIS eligibility and the application process. They also experience barriers in accessing information.
- Many people with disability from CALD backgrounds have different understandings of disability and when it might be the right time to get support.
- There is limited access to resources (including in-language content) to support with people with disability from CALD backgrounds to understand the NDIS.

Broader challenges

The challenges listed in each priority area have guided the co-design of the actions and goals in the Strategy (detailed in Section 4).

Throughout the development of the Strategy and Action Plan, CALD participants, their families and their carers also discussed broader issues and challenges they experience with the NDIS.

These issues add to the challenges CALD communities already experience. Details on these issues can be found in Appendix C.

4. Strategy

The Strategy aims to improve outcomes for CALD participants by addressing 6 priority areas:

1. Infrastructure
2. Staff capability
3. Accessible communications
4. Markets
5. Data
6. Outreach

Each of the 6 areas have goals and actions.

Goals:
are the long-term outcomes the NDIA wants to achieve.

Actions:
are what the NDIA will do to achieve the goals.

The 28 actions have been developed and will be implemented together with people with disability from CALD backgrounds, their families and their carers, NEDA, the EAG and other sector representatives.

This Strategy is supported by a separate Action Plan to guide the implementation, monitoring and reporting of the actions.

Photo above: With help from NDIS support workers, NDIS participant Esther regularly takes her children to the park or shopping, attends school, sports and community events. Read Esther's story on the NDIS website.

4.1 Infrastructure

Infrastructure is about cultural and language needs being built into NDIS and partner systems, policies and procedures.

Goal 1

The NDIA uses co-designed and agreed definitions of 'cultural safety' and 'culturally appropriate and responsive service'.

Action

1. Work with CALD disability communities, partners, providers and the NDIS Commission to define 'cultural safety' and 'culturally appropriate and responsive service'.

Goal 2

NDIS policies, procedures and systems enable equitable access to the NDIS and use of plans for people with disability from CALD backgrounds.

Actions

2. Review and update NDIS Operational Guidelines to make sure they are inclusive, are culturally safe and recognise the cultural and language needs of participants (based on outcomes of Action 1).

3. Develop and provide guidance to planners to improve their understanding of the supports needed by CALD participants. This should include:

   a. support for CALD participants with plan implementation if language or culture is a barrier
   b. availability of in-language resources for CALD participants
   c. funding for greater social and community participation for CALD participants
   d. increased use of communication methods that are culturally and linguistically accessible.

4. Develop and publish guidance that helps NDIS staff and partners better support refugees and newly arrived migrants through the NDIS application process in a culturally appropriate and timely way.

5. Work with government agencies to better support refugees and newly arrived migrants to access the NDIS. This may include using information from health assessments and supporting documents completed before arrival to help identify people with disability more effectively.

Goal 3

NDIS communication processes with CALD communities and participants are culturally appropriate, are effective and transparent, and promote trust.

Action

6. Work with the NDIS Commission to develop and implement processes and guidelines. These will help people with disability from CALD backgrounds provide feedback and appeal NDIS decisions in culturally safe and accessible ways.

'I'm just so thankful for the NDIS. I'm as happy now as I've ever been in my life, and I wouldn't be where I am without the NDIS.'

Hande, NDIS participant.
Read Hande's story on the NDIS website.

4.2 Staff capability

Staff capability is about NDIS staff and partners having the understanding and ability to provide a culturally safe and responsive service to participants and their families.

Goal 4

NDIS staff and partners understand and respond to the cultural and language needs of participants and how these needs may affect their disability supports.

Actions

7. Work with CALD communities, government agencies (including the NDIS Commission) and non-government organisations to deliver an ongoing education program to NDIS staff and partners. The program will work to improve cultural and language awareness (including d/Deaf, Deafblind, and hard of hearing), and ability to provide safe, effective and appropriate interactions with people from CALD backgrounds.

8. Support employment opportunities for people from CALD backgrounds (including those with disability) at the NDIA to improve representation at all levels.

Goal 5

NDIS staff and partners use cultural safety and trauma-informed practice in all engagements.

Actions

9. Work with CALD communities, government agencies (including the NDIS Commission) and non-government organisations to build education and training on cultural safety, anti-racism and trauma-informed practice into the NDIA's training packages.

10. Develop and deliver training and resources to NDIS staff and partners on the use of interpreters and other language supports to improve the experience of people with disability from CALD backgrounds when interacting with the NDIS.

11. Develop a CALD inclusion plan and program that continues to develop and progress a culturally safe and inclusive workplace for NDIS staff.

12. Establish a community of practice which shares learnings to help staff improve their skills so they can better support the d/Deaf, Deafblind and hard of hearing communities. This team will include NDIS staff and partners who are skilled in using Auslan. It will promote accessibility through guidelines, processes and support for engagement opportunities.

'The NDIS has made a world of difference for our family. Willow is a happier child now because she is gaining strength, moving around and is less frustrated.'

Kerry, mother of NDIS participant Willow. Read Willows's story on the NDIS website.

4.3 Accessible communications

Accessible communication is about the NDIS sharing information in ways that meet the cultural and communication needs of CALD participants, their families and their carers.

Goal 6

Effective communication channels for CALD communities and participants are identified and used by the NDIS.

Actions

13. Work with CALD communities, the NDIS Commission and the sector to develop and implement guidelines about how to effectively communicate and engage with people with disability from CALD backgrounds. This includes information in language, and through different channels, such as video, audio and print.

14. Review and update the NDIS website, myplace portal, My NDIS application, Provider finder tool, myplace provider portal and National Contact Centre to improve accessibility and navigation for CALD communities and participants. This includes using information in-language and accessing help when in-language information is not available.

15. Work with CALD communities, the NDIS Commission and the sector to develop, publish and implement language guidelines. The guidelines should outline which languages information about the NDIS should be translated into, as to meet the needs of CALD communities and participants.

Goal 7

CALD communities and providers are made aware of, and can access, interpreting services, and have improved experience with these services.

Actions

16. Develop and publish clear definitions of NDIS-specific terms in-language to support CALD participants, providers and Translating and Interpreting Services (TIS) better understand and communicate NDIS specific-terms.

17. Develop and communicate accessible information to CALD communities, CALD participants and providers about how to access and use TIS and alternative interpreters when TIS interpreters are unavailable.

18. Review and update processes for NDIS meetings with interpreters (including Auslan) to improve communication approaches, including options for longer meetings, preferred or required interpreters and in-person interpreting services.

'I love working at the school, everyone is nice. I have a staff uniform and a name badge. I like doing different jobs like laminating and organising the books. It makes me happy.'

Justin, NDIS participant.
Read Justin's story on the NDIS website.

4.4 Markets

Markets is about improving the availability and supply of culturally and linguistically appropriate NDIS services. This includes providing better support to CALD participants to find providers that offer culturally safe and appropriate services.

Goal 8

Information about using the NDIS and accessing culturally safe and appropriate services is effectively communicated to CALD communities and participants.

Actions

19. Work with the NDIS Commission to develop and share information with NDIS providers. Engage with providers to increase their understanding of their local community. Explain the expectation for them to deliver culturally safe and appropriate supports and services to CALD communities.

20. Work with the NDIS Commission to develop a marketing campaign and ongoing communication to raise awareness about choice and control. This includes how CALD participants can choose providers, change providers, build safeguards and make complaints.

21. Engage with the NDIS Commission to develop minimum practice standards that providers are required to follow, as well as quality measures that outline what culturally appropriate services look like. The practice standards and quality measures are then clearly communicated to CALD participants and providers.

Goal 9

There are more NDIS providers offering quality services that are culturally appropriate, responsive and safe.

Actions

22. Identify the challenges and barriers CALD community organisations face in delivering disability supports (including support coordination and direct care). Work with government agencies and the sector to address these barriers.

23. Work with government agencies and other stakeholders on how to increase the number of interpreters certified by the National Accreditation Authority for Translators and Interpreters (NAATI) who understand the NDIS and disability rights.

Since joining the NDIS, Fritz has found his dream job baking cookies.

'Cooking helps me to improve myself. If I work hard, anything is possible.'

Fritz, NDIS participant.
Read Fritz's story on the NDIS website.

4.5 Data

Data is about the NDIA collecting and using data to better understand CALD participants and their needs, improve services and understand the impact of the NDIS.

Goal 10

The NDIA uses a co-designed and agreed definition of 'CALD' that supports the collection of accurate and useful data.

Action

1. Work with CALD communities and government agencies to develop and publish a more inclusive definition of CALD that recognises cultural and linguistic intersections. Update NDIA data collection methods to align with this definition.

Goal 11

Data and evidence-based decision making are used by the NDIA and stakeholders to improve services, experiences and outcomes for CALD participants.

Action

2. Research, identify and publish new data on participants from CALD backgrounds to enable better evidence-based decision making by NDIS staff, partners and the sector.

4.6 Outreach

Outreach is about building targeted supports and services to educate and connect with people and communities that the NDIA has not previously engaged well with.

Goal 12

There is greater awareness and understanding of the NDIS and disability in CALD communities. This includes NDIS eligibility, the application process and the potential stigma around disability as a barrier to accessing the NDIS.

Actions

3. Work with the NDIS Commission and CALD community to develop a strategy to raise awareness about the NDIS and disability rights in targeted CALD communities, and address potential stigma around disability. It should use many different engagement channels, with information available in-language.

4. Identify, develop and support activities from community organisations that promote awareness of the NDIS (including eligibility) and reduce stigma around disability in targeted CALD communities. Develop clear communication to the sector to promote these activities, and provide guidance on how NDIS staff and partners could be involved and supportive.

5. Work with organisations and peak bodies to build the skills of mainstream services (including health professionals such as general practitioners, allied health professionals and specialists). Focusing on how to support people with disability from CALD backgrounds to access and use the NDIS.

5. Next steps

The Strategy will be active from early 2024 to 2028. The Action Plan is to be used alongside the Strategy. It outlines:

- how each action will be carried out
- the timeline for each action
- the outcomes as a result of each action
- the measures to track and evaluate progress.

The first annual progress report will be published in late 2024. It will show the progress made towards achieving the Strategy's actions and outcomes. As part of this process the NDIA will invite feedback from the EAG and other stakeholders.

Listening to and learning from feedback over time means the NDIA can continue to meet the needs of CALD participants by being responsive to the changes in and feedback from the disability and CALD sectors.

The ongoing monitoring and reporting functions of the Strategy will show how the NDIS is improving outcomes for people with disability from CALD backgrounds, and will identify areas for improvement.

The NDIA is committed to continue working closely with people with disability from CALD backgrounds, their families and carers, peak bodies, disability representative organisations, and service providers. The NDIA will do this to make sure the Strategy can respond to the needs of CALD communities and the disability and CALD sectors into the future.

Photo above: The NDIS had made a huge impact on the lives of participant Kaarthik and his family who migrated to Australia from India 40 years ago. Read Kaarthik's story on the NDIS website.

6. Appendix A

External Advisory Group membership list (by organisation)

- Action on Disability within Ethnic Communities
- Amparo Advocacy Inc
- Canberra Multicultural Community Forum
- Disability Advocacy Network Australia
- Deaf Australia
- Disability Rights Advocacy Service
- Cultura (previously Diversitat)
- Diversity and Disability Alliance
- Ethnic Communities' Council of Victoria
- Ethnic Communities Services Co-operative
- Federation of Ethnic Communities' Council of Australia
- Griffith University
- Inclusion Australia
- Independent Advisory Council to the NDIA
- Kin
- Mental Health Australia
- Migrant Resource Centre Launceston
- Migrant Resource Centre North-West
- Multicultural Council of the Northern Territory
- Multicultural Disability Advocacy Association of NSW
- Multicultural Youth Advocacy Network/s – Youth Disability CaLD Collective
- National Disability Insurance Agency
- NDIS Quality and Safeguards Commission
- National Ethnic Disability Alliance
- NSW Refugee Health Service
- Participant, family and carer nominee
- People with Disability Australia
- Settlement Council of Australia
- Settlement Services International
- Speak My Language
- SydWest Multicultural Services
- TASC National
- The University of Sydney
- Women with Disabilities Australia

7. Appendix B

Overview of engagement

The NDIA has engaged with people who identify as having cultural backgrounds from the following regions:

- Central America
- South America
- Caribbean islands
- Europe – North
- Europe – Central
- Europe – East
- Africa – North
- Asia – North-East
- Asia – Central
- Asia – South
- Asia – South-East
- Asia – West
- Pacific Islands

The NDIA has engaged with people who identify their linguistic background as:

- English
- Arabic
- Tagalog
- Tamil
- Japanese
- Bengali
- Russian
- French
- German
- Cantonese
- Vietnamese
- Mandarin
- Hokkien
- Bahasa Malayu

7. Appendix B: Overview of engagement

The NDIA has engaged individuals and groups who identify as being a part of the following communities:

- Chinese community group
- Mixed multicultural groups
- Industry sex worker group (from various CALD communities)
- Arabic community group
- Vietnamese carer's group
- Afghan community group
- Nepalese humanitarian migrants
- CALD youth group
- Ezidi (Yazidi) refugees community group
- Punjabi community group
- Hindu community group
- d/Deaf, deafblind and hard of hearing community group

The NDIA has engaged with the following organisations as part of the national stakeholder engagements:

- Access Community Services Limited
- Access Plus WA Deaf
- Active Refugee and Migrant Integration in Australia
- Amparo Advocacy Inc
- Australia Refugee Association
- Australian Migrant Resource Centre
- Centacare
- Community Access and Services SA
- Deaf Connect
- Deafblind Western Australians
- Ethnic Communities' Council of NSW Incorporated
- Fortify Health Group
- Multicultural Communities Council of SA
- Multicultural Australia
- National Care Society
- Queensland Program of Assistance to Survivors of Torture and Trauma
- Foundation House (The Victorian Foundation for Survivors of Torture Inc)
- Western Australian Association of the Deaf Inc.
- World Wellness Group

8. Appendix C

Broader considerations and issues

The Strategy and Action Plan address 6 priority areas identified in the co-design process. Section 3 sets out the key challenges in these priority areas.

Additional considerations and challenges were raised throughout the development of the Strategy and Action Plan. These considerations and challenges impact the way CALD participants, their families and their carers access and use the NDIS. They were also heard in conversations with participants during the 2023 NDIS review.

Though not addressed through this strategy, the insights listed below are expected to inform future work, and improve how the NDIA engages with people with disability.

- **Applying for the NDIS:** the application process has many steps and is confusing. There are also challenges with understanding and collecting the evidence required. This is compounded by multiple sources of information and misalignment between the health and disability sectors.

- **Intersectionality:** the experiences of people with disability from CALD communities are impacted by multiple factors that shape their identity such as gender identification, sexual orientation, religion or socioeconomic background. This intersectionality requires individualised support and responsiveness from NDIS staff, processes and systems.

- **Provider quality:** the quality of disability services are inconsistent and impacted by the NDIA having less ability to monitor quality and safeguard participant experiences with unregistered service providers.

- **Provider competition:** uncompetitive markets or uncompetitive provider behaviour can lead to participants using one service provider for multiple supports. This can result in conflicts of interest and reduced participant choice and control.

- **Lack of collaboration between government agencies:** more alignment is needed to identify and provide required support (for example, to build English language skills).

- **Limitations of health providers:** health professionals (including health professionals such as general practitioners, allied health professionals and specialists) lack knowledge, and incentives to improve their knowledge, on how to support people appropriately with access request forms.

- **Experience of domestic and family violence:** domestic and family violence causes additional barriers for participants when accessing and using NDIS supports.

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National Disability Insurance Scheme

🏠 Website: ndis.gov.au

📞 Telephone: 1800 800 110

💬 Webchat: ndis.gov.au

Follow us on our social channels

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For people who need help with English

TIS: 131 450

For people who are deaf or hard of hearing

TTY: 1800 555 677

Voice relay: 1800 555 727

🌐 National Relay Service: accesshub.gov.au