



# Inquiry into independent assessments

## What we want to tell the Joint Standing Committee

Easy Read version

April 2021



Australian Government  
Department of Social Services

ndis

## How to use this document



The Australian Government Department of Social Services (DSS) and the National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA) wrote this document. When you see the word 'we', it means DSS and the NDIA.



This document is written in an easy to read way. We use pictures to explain some ideas.

**Bold**

We have written some words in **bold**.

Not bold

This means the letters are thicker and darker.



We explain what these words mean.

There is a list of these words on page 27.



This Easy Read document is a summary of another document.



You can find the other document on the NDIS website at

[www.ndis.gov.au/media/2988/download](http://www.ndis.gov.au/media/2988/download)



You can ask for help to read this document. A friend, family member or support person may be able to help you.

## What's in this document?

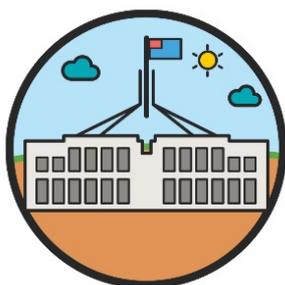
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## What is this document about?



An **inquiry** is how the government looks into a:

- problem
- new idea.



It helps the government find out everything they need to know before they make a decision.



A **committee** is a group of people who meet to talk about ideas.



The Joint Standing Committee looks at how well the NDIS works.

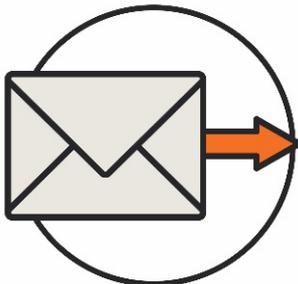
We call them the Committee.



At the moment the Committee is looking at how well independent assessments will work.



We talk about independent assessments on page 7.



People can send a document to the Committee to tell them what they think about independent assessments.



This document talks about what we want the Committee to know about independent assessments.

We want the Committee to know:



- why we have decided to use independent assessments



- how we are making sure they work well



- how independent assessments will make the NDIS work better.

## What are independent assessments?

The NDIA uses **assessments** to work out:



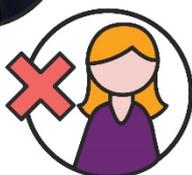
- how someone's disability affects their life



- what funding they need from the NDIA.



An assessment is **independent** when it is done by someone who doesn't:



- already know the person
- work for the NDIA.



The NDIA will choose a group of organisations who have people working for them who can do independent assessments.

We call them **independent assessors**.

## Independent assessors:



- don't work for the NDIA



- have experience working with people with disability.

Independent assessors are healthcare workers such as:



- occupational therapists – people who help you move and use your body



- speech pathologists – people who help you with talking and communicating.



Independent assessors will use some documents to do independent assessments.

We call them **assessment tools**.

In this document, we just call them tools.



Independent assessors will use these tools to look at someone's **functional capacity**.



Your functional capacity is:

- your ability to do things
- the skills you have
- how you manage everyday life.

We sometimes call it your capacity.



Functional capacity is a key part of working out:

- if someone can take part in the NDIS
- what **funding** someone needs from the NDIS.



Funding is the money from your NDIS plan that pays for the supports and services you need.



It's important for the NDIA to have good information about someone's capacity.



It helps them make the right decision about:

- whether they need support from the NDIS
- what funding they need.



You can find more information about independent assessments on the **NDIS website**.

## Why we want to start using independent assessments



At the moment, **participants** need to get information about their functional capacity on their own.



Participants are people with disability who take part in the NDIS.



Getting this information can:

- take a lot of time
- cost a lot of money.



And different healthcare workers often don't collect the same information.



Independent assessments will make sure assessors collect the same:

- type of information
- detail of information.

This means the NDIA can make more **consistent** decisions about:



- who can take part in the NDIS
- what funding participants receive from the NDIS.



When something is consistent, it is done the same way every time.



Independent assessments will be free.

This will help people give the NDIA the information they need to make decisions no matter:



- where they live
- what support they get now.

## Flexible plans and funding



Independent assessments will also help us make other parts of the NDIS work better.



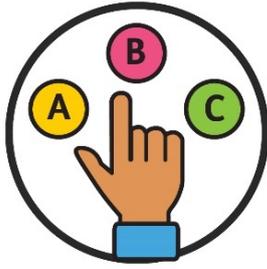
We are changing the way funding works in participants' plans so it is more **flexible**.



When funding is flexible, it means you can use it in different ways.



At the moment participants must spend their funding on certain supports.



But flexible funding will give each participant more choice and control over how they spend their funding.



Flexible funding will let participants choose what services and supports they use.

And it will make sure participants can use different supports to:



- work towards their goals



- help them do things for themselves.

## We asked the community to tell us what they think



It is important to find out what the community thinks about how we want to change the NDIS.



In November 2020, the NDIA wrote 3 papers to find out what the community thinks.



Our 3 papers were about:

- independent assessments
- flexible funding
- supporting young children early.



You can find these papers on the **NDIS website**.

We asked a range of people to tell us what they thought about the papers, including:



- people with disability



- families and carers



- service providers



- disability organisations.



People have told us they are worried about some of the things we want to change.



We understand that changing how the NDIS works might make people:

- unsure
- worried.



On the following pages we explain some of the things people have told us they are worried about.

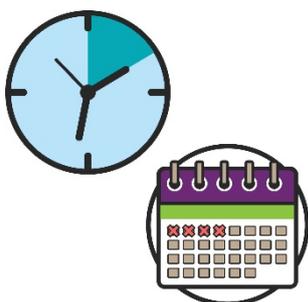


We also explain why the changes will work well.

## Independent assessments



Independent assessments will take as long as they need to so we can make sure they work well.



They can:

- last for a couple of hours or more
- be spread out over a couple of days.



They can include information from people who know the person with disability best, such as their family or friends.



And the person with disability can bring someone to support them for:

- the whole time
- part of the time.



People with disability can choose where they have their independent assessment, such as:

- on a video call
- at home.



There might be some people with disability who can't have an independent assessment, for example if it will not be safe for them to take part.

## Decisions about taking part in the NDIS



Independent assessors will not make decisions about:

- who can take part in the NDIS
- how much funding we give a participant.



A person who works for the NDIA will make those decisions, such as an **NDIA Planner**.



An NDIA Planner is a person who makes decisions about plans.

They work for the NDIA.



NDIA Planners will make decisions using information from independent assessors.



People with disability can collect other information to help them decide how to use their funding.



An NDIA Planner will talk to the participant about how they can use their plan to:

- work towards their goals
- help them do things for themselves.

## Independent assessors



We will make sure independent assessors have the right:

- skills
- experience
- training.

We will make sure independent assessors know how to support the needs of people with disability, including:



- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples



- people who speak a language other than English



- people who need more support during their independent assessment, such as people with mental health problems.



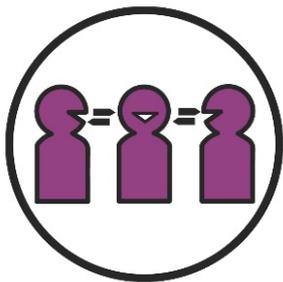
We will make sure there are independent assessors that suit everyone's needs.



This includes people who live in **rural and remote areas**.



Rural and remote areas are places far away from cities or towns.



We can organise an **interpreter** who speaks your language to come with you to your independent assessment.



An interpreter is someone who:

- speaks your language
- helps you understand what someone is saying.

## Independent assessment tools



Independent assessors will use tools that:

- are used around the world
- work well.



The NDIA chose these tools because they focus on a person's functional capacity, not the type of disability they have.

This means they focus on:



- what a person can do

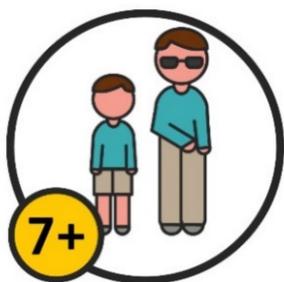


- what skills they have



- what support they need in their day-to-day life.

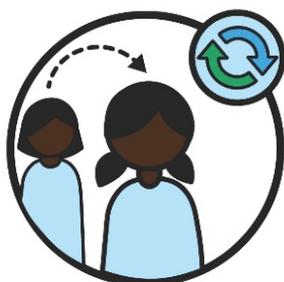
## Supporting children as they grow



The NDIA will start using independent assessments for people aged 7 years and older.



The NDIA is currently working out the best way for children aged under 7 years old to have independent assessments.



This is because young children change and grow so fast.



This is part of how the NDIA is changing support for children.

## More information

For more information about this document,  
please contact us.



[www.ndis.gov.au](http://www.ndis.gov.au)



1800 800 110



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If you speak a language other than English, you can call:



Translating and Interpreting Service (TIS)

**131 450**

If you have a speech or hearing impairment, you can call:



TTY

**1800 555 677**



Speak and Listen

**1800 555 727**



National Relay Service

**133 677**

[www.relayservice.gov.au](http://www.relayservice.gov.au)

## Word list



### Assessment

The NDIA uses assessments to work out:

- how someone's disability affects their life
- what funding they need from the NDIS.



### Committee

A committee is a group of people who meet to talk about ideas.



### Consistent

When something is consistent, it is done the same way every time.



### Flexible

When funding is flexible, it means you can use it in different ways.



### Functional capacity

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- don't work for the NDIA
- have experience working with people with disability.



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## Participant

Participants are people with disability who take part in the NDIS.



## Rural and remote areas

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