

Participant Reference Group

Meeting summary – 9 April 2025

The Participant Reference Group (PRG) makes sure the National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA) hears and understands the participant voice. The PRG has 23 members from participant and carer organisations across Australia.

The NDIA uses feedback from PRG meetings to keep making the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) better. PRG members work on what the NDIA plans to do. They work on new and current policies, improving the systems we use, and how we deliver services.

Chairperson's welcome

Barny Lee is the Director, Office of the Participant Advocate, and was the chairperson for this meeting. Barny welcomed members to the meeting.

Session – Therapy claiming

The NDIS Pricing Arrangements and Price Limits (PAPL) have rules for how NDIS participants get therapy supports.

When an NDIS participant claims for a therapy service, the NDIA does not ask about the person who gave the service. This means we do not know if that person meets the rules in the PAPL.

An allied health therapist may register with the Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency (AHPRA). They will get a unique identifier (ID) number.

Some therapists, for example dietitians or speech pathologists, may be part of a self-regulating health profession organisation. These therapists will also have a unique ID number.

The NDIA said therapists need to put their ID number on their invoice. We said therapists will use the ID number they get from their regulating body. Having the ID number on invoices will reduce fraud and improve outcomes for participants.

Participants must check their therapists are registered.

Some therapists may already put their ID number on their invoice. Participants with Agency-managed and plan-managed services might not see changes if their therapist already meets NDIA rules.

The NDIA is working with groups like the PRG to make sure this change will work. We said we are using the term practitioner ID to cover all therapists.

PRG members asked why the NDIA did not start the ID system for therapists earlier. The NDIA said the NDIS is still growing. We said we need to make our systems match other systems like Medicare (MBS) and the private health claims system (HICAPS).

The NDIA said there will be an extra field on the claim form for self-managed participants to put the ID number. PRG members said this will mean extra work for self-managed participants.

PRG members said that people who were blind or had low vision need to know how to put in the ID number. They asked about including the ID number for therapy services they claim from consumables, for example podiatry. The NDIA said there is an option on the claim form to include the ID number.

PRG members said participants need support to understand this change. They said clear communication is important, so participants know how to use their plans.

PRG members split into smaller groups to talk about the new process.

Breakout group 1

PRG members said the NDIA needs to make sure participants keep choice and control. They said the NDIA needs to keep it as simple as possible.

PRG members said there needs to be education, communication, and support in the roll out. They said a pilot or soft launch would be easier than rolling out to everyone at once. They said the NDIA needs to tell participants what they need to do and why.

PRG members said there may be therapists who do not have a professional body. Those therapists may not have the right reference number.

PRG members said there should be support and the right type of communications for self-managed participants, First Nations, and CALD communities.

PRG members said the NDIA should learn from other systems like MBS and HICAPS.

Breakout group 2

PRG members said the new system could have a search option for the ID number. They said it could be like an Australian Business Number, with a drop-down menu.

PRG members said the NDIA should check the claims have the right information. They said participants should not have to make sure the therapist is registered.

PRG members said there should be other options for therapists in rural areas. They said those therapists may not have the right ID number. They said there may be some new therapists who need time to register and get an ID number.

PRG members said there needs to be clear communication about the change. They said this should be in the app as well as social media. They said there should be a couple of months of communication before the change starts.

PRG members said the NDIA needs to be clear about why we are making the change. They said it is new for the NDIS, but other government organisations use it.

Breakout group 3

PRG members said communication needs to be clear about what providers and participants need to do. This includes who needs to supply the information.

PRG members said the NDIA should make sure there is a process for getting ID numbers from therapists. Some therapists don't make their ID numbers public.

PRG members said all communication should be easy to understand. It should be in many formats.

PRG members said the NDIA should explain why this change is happening. We should explain how to manage the change. The change should help participants get the right supports and services.

Breakout group 4

PRG members said the process should focus on participants. It should be as accessible as possible.

PRG members said therapists should provide ID numbers so participants do not have to ask for them. They said the NDIA could give participants a letter to send to each therapist.

PRG members said the rollout should be slow and careful, over 6 to 12 months. This will allow time for changes for therapists who have just registered or who need to register.

PRG members said the way participants manage their plans will mean there are differences in what they need to do. They said privacy and safeguards should apply to all Agency, plan, and self-managed participants.

Final comments and close

The NDIA thanked PRG members for their feedback. We said we are at the very early stage of this change. We said we will use the feedback from PRG members to work on this change.

Barny thanked PRG members for their time and contribution.

Next meeting

Tuesday 13 and Wednesday 14 May 2025

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