

Participant Reference Group

Meeting summary – 10 September 2025

This is a summary of the Participant Reference Group's (PRG) recent meeting. The PRG is a key platform to make sure the participant voice is heard and understood by the National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA). The NDIA uses feedback from meetings to keep improving our processes.

Chairperson's welcome

Barny Lee (Director of Participant Experience Team, Office of the Participant Advocate) welcomed members to the PRG meeting.

The NDIA is working with Whereto, an independent research company to understand how people feel about two recent changes to the NDIS. These changes include new support lists and shorter funding periods. Today's session is part of a wider conversation where Whereto is listening to feedback from NDIS participants.

NDIS support lists

The new support lists show what the NDIS will and won't pay for. These lists aim to make things clearer for participants.

Summary of feedback

There is confusion and inconsistency in support lists. People don't understand why some items are approved and others aren't. Communication is poor, and decisions often lack explanation.

There's also less flexibility. Getting replacements takes months, and participants must give up other supports. Items approved before are now rejected. This reduces choice and control.

Participants feel stressed and afraid to ask questions or challenge decisions. They feel unsupported and disempowered.

Suggestions for improving support lists

- Work with participants to design the lists.
- Add a third category for items that depend on individual needs.
- Group items by support type or budget and use plain English.
- Provide Easy Read versions, translations, and audio/video tools.
- Explain how decisions are made and train NDIA staff to give clear answers.
- Use consistent terminology across the support lists, price guides, and operational guidelines.
- Make the process for replacing items faster and more transparent.
- Allow pre-approval for replacements and avoid full plan reviews for small changes.

NDIS funding periods

The second change is about how often people receive their NDIS funding. Instead of getting money for a full year, participants now get smaller amounts every three months. The total amount stays the same. The NDIA hopes this change will help people manage their money better and avoid spending it too quickly.

Summary of feedback

This change causes problems. The total amount stays the same, but participants said this change makes things harder.

Many are afraid of overspending and getting into debt. Some avoid using their funding. The change affects people with complex needs, those in remote areas, and people from CALD backgrounds more than others.

Suggestions for Improving Funding Periods

- Make shorter funding periods optional based on participant history.
- Trust participants who manage their budgets well.
- Allow front-loading for known expenses like assessments or equipment.
- Keep the system simple and flexible.
- Support people with changing needs.
- NDIA staff need training and standardised guidance to ensure participants get accurate and consistent information.
- There should be a clear process and timeline for emergency funding.

Improving Communication

Participants want better communication about changes. Some only found out through advocacy groups or personal research. NDIA staff need training to give consistent information. Participants should get updates through letters, emails, and provider briefings.

Information should be in Easy Read, plain English, and other languages. Include visuals and examples. There should be clear processes for emergency funding.

Final comments and close

The NDIA thanked PRG members for their feedback.

There will be a third session about the evidence participants need to give to the NDIA.

Barny Lee and the facilitators thanked PRG members for their time and contribution.

Next meeting

Tuesday 28 and Wednesday 29 October 2025

End of document