First Nations Strategy to ensure better outcomes for First Nations people living with disability

17 January 2025

The Australian Government has announced a new strategy designed to ensure First Nations people living with disability receive the culturally safe and accessible support they need through the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS).

Minister for the NDIS, the Hon. Bill Shorten MP, said the National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA) today released a five-year NDIS First Nations Strategy 2025-2030, saying it was a key step to improving the lives of First Nations people with disability.

“We recognise the multiple challenges and barriers First Nations people have experienced in accessing the NDIS, including culturally safe and effective NDIS services and supports,” he said.

“We know changes need to be made and they need to be made together with First Nations people. So, I’m extremely proud today to announce the new NDIS First Nations Strategy 2025-2030.

“The strategy represents a commitment to meaningful action to address systemic barriers and challenges for First Nations people who are already on the Scheme, and for those who need supports but may not yet have them.

“It’s the first step in making the changes needed to deliver a better NDIS and better outcomes for First Nations people with disability across Australia.

“It’s also a key step in responding to both the Disability Royal Commission and the NDIS Review, while also delivering on our stated commitment to the National Agreement on Closing the Gap and working across government to Close the Gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians.”

Minister Shorten said the First Nations Strategy was developed with a First Nations Strategy Working Group that comprised First Nations NDIS participants, providers and partners in the community, as well as First Nations peak bodies and advocates. Members represented geographic, gender, age, disability and intersectional diversity.

“Besides contributing their own expertise, the Working Group incorporated the views of over 650 First Nations people who shared their experiences, including through the Disability Royal Commission and NDIS Review.”

Minister Shorten today also announced the creation of a new NDIA Independent Advisory Council (IAC) First Nations Reference Group.

He said the Reference Group, which will hold its first meeting in February 2025, will play a vital role in strengthening strategic advice to the NDIA Board on policies and services affecting First Nations people.

“The government is 100 per cent committed to working closely with First Nations people with disability, their families, advocates and communities to co-design the reforms needed to achieve

better outcomes," Minister Shorten said.

Minister Shorten said the NDIA had improved its approach to engaging First Nations people under the leadership of Deputy CEO and First Nations Champion Adjunct Professor Dr Janine Mohamed, who is a proud Narungga Kaurna woman from South Australia.

Dr Mohamed also welcomed the new strategy and its significance for First Nations people with disability.

"For us, it's about equity for current and future participants and improving experiences and outcomes for them. I really want to make participants and everyone else involved in their lives feel valued and culturally safe." Dr Mohamed said.

"When First Nations people come across this work where we are setting a vision for the future, it is always about the voices of the past and present and future generations. So, this strategy works with that in mind – First Nations ways of knowing, being and doing."

The NDIS is now supporting over 52,000 First Nations participants.

Read more about the First Nations Strategy.

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