25 August 2025

Key themes and insights

Current issues

Key themes: Scheme Reform and introduction of funding periods.

- A major focus for 2025 is the transition to the new and fairer way of planning that will be introduced over a 5-year period.
- The NDIA is preparing to introduce impairment notices to existing participants.
- Funding periods began rolling out on 19 May. Not all plans will have 3-month periods. Decisions about funding periods are based on the unique circumstances of a participant including their preference.

Key insights:

- Members were interested to know the Agency's progress with tenders for assessment tools and timeframes for implementation, highlighting the importance of being able to use multiple assessment tools.
- Members shared concerns about the flexibility of funding periods on different parts of participant plans, and the importance of having updated risk and safeguarding processes in place to respond to urgent change of circumstances requests.
- Members were interested to know how the timing of reforms impacts the trajectory of the 8% Scheme growth target.
- Meeting papers were provided late, and members stressed the importance of the NDIA adhering to the Terms of Reference.

Transitioning to New Planning Framework

Key themes:

- Participants will transition to new framework planning over 5 years. New framework planning will involve participants completing a support needs assessment and getting a new plan with a more flexible budget.
- Adult participants will likely move to the new planning process first. This may be done over several cohorts based on complexity.
- Participants will receive a notice of transition with information on timing and what they will need to prepare before they have a support needs assessment.
- The NDIA have developed and shared a set of principles to guide when a participant is suitable for transition:

- Availability of the Support Needs Assessment
- Stability of a participant's current circumstances.
- Geographical location.
- Impact of transitioning cohorts on Scheme outcomes.

Key insights:

- Members urged the Agency to review the language used in communications about reforms. There is a need for simple information about changes for participants, and clear definitions of new terms being used. Communications about reforms should be starting as soon as possible so participants know what to expect.
- Participants should get clear information about when they will transition to the new planning approach, what to expect, what they need to do to prepare and why these changes are happening.
- Members expressed some concerns about the timing of transitioning participants to the new approach, noting foundational supports may not be in place as recommended by the NDIS Review.

Budget flexibility and future approach to home and living budgets

Key themes:

- The NDIA is working to make plan budgets much more flexible. This means significantly reducing the number of line-items down to 17 support type categories, with 5 categories that can be listed as flexible to improve usability. These categories represent up to 74% of Scheme expenditure.
- In-home and community supports is one of the 5 flexible line-item categories.
- The NDIA plans to implement the Home and Living Framework in stages to deliver more flexible funding for in-home supports, enabling more choice for participants, and with the aim of fostering more innovative home and living solutions from the market.

Key insights:

- Some members were concerned with Residential Aged Care being a stated support and changes to aged care legislation regarding people over 50 who are at risk of homelessness if they continue to live in residential aged care, noting this was primarily for billing purposes of current participants
- As the new rules develop, there is a need for discretionary decisions to safeguard from unintentional errors.

- Concerns regarding flexibility of home and living funding for participants with different levels of support wanting to live together and there being sufficient shared funds to meet their varying support needs.

DRCO Forum 2025 workplan

Key themes:

- The DRCO Forum is now in the second year of operating with a shared secretariat function, reinforcing its commitment to working in a more collaborative, participatory, and values-driven way.
- DANA have established monthly DRCO Forum out of session meetings to facilitate input from members on proposed agenda items and provide feedback on the draft agenda to the Agency.
- The membership working group is working on the role DRCO members play and the membership application process.
- Seeking feedback on the NDIA DRCO Membership Practice Expectations – How We Engage, that is a set of guidelines for participation at DRCO Forum meetings.

Key insights:

- The NDIA to focus on improving how and when information is shared ahead of meetings.
- Members suggest they work on ways they can highlight issues when the Membership Practice Expectations are not being met and consider next steps.

NDIS Rules Engagement plan update, led by Department of Social Services

Key themes:

- The NDIS policy team within the Department of Social Services (DSS) will be moving to the new Department of Health, Disability and Ageing. The team will continue to work on developing NDIS Rules and policy.
- DSS has started engaging the sector on the experience of the NDIS Support rules and the changes needed ahead of the New Planning Framework commencing. Public consultation will be open for 6 weeks in June and July.

Key insights:

- Members discussed opportunities for advocacy and connecting across disability and health policy and reform with the change of departments, for example more cohesive support services across health and mental health systems and the NDIS.

- Members are keen to engage with the work that has commenced on the Disability Health Navigators project.
- Members expressed the need for coordination across consultations both the Agency and Department are holding on the same topics to avoid duplication.

Consultation: improving the Eligibility Reassessment experience

Key themes:

- The NDIA is working to ensure there is compliance with legal requirements under the Act while delivering a supportive, person-centred experience. A co-design project is underway to improve the eligibility reassessment process. The NDIA is consulting with the DRCO Forum as part of this project.
- The Agency wants to make sure it is clear what evidence participants need to provide and what good evidence of permanent and significant disability looks like.
- Work is also underway on ways the Agency can better support participants with rapidly changing support needs as a result of degenerative conditions, including considering the right frequency of plan reassessments.

Key insights:

- There is confusion, fear and anxiety in the community about changes to eligibility reassessments.
- Members are concerned about participants with permanent disability having to go through the process of re-proving their disability.
- Members highlighted the need for a tailored support approach for people with psychosocial disability to reduce the risk of individuals disengaging with services.
- Consideration needed on the frequency of plan reassessments for people with episodic and degenerative disabilities.
- There is a need for clearer timelines, improved communication, and advice to participants about what they need to do as part of an eligibility reassessment.

Meet and greet with Minister for the NDIS, The Hon. Jenny McAllister

Key themes:

- The Minister acknowledged the importance of the social model of disability in bringing the disability and health portfolios together.

- There is an opportunity to ensure the health and ageing service systems are inclusive of people with disability under the new structure.
- The Minister discussed the opportunity to work with services across all health, aged care and disability systems to identify ways of ensuring the care economy functions well, and in the interests of the people who rely on them.
- The Minister emphasised the importance of building honest, respectful relationships with the disability community and stakeholders.
- The Minister highlighted the need to make reforms work for people with disability across diverse life experience.

Key insights:

- Members expressed concerns about the number of participants exiting the NDIS and the delay in the introduction of foundational supports. Members want to see better safety nets in place to make sure people with disability do not miss out on needed supports.
- The merging of disability and health portfolios is seen as a promising opportunity to create a more connected and inclusive system of care.
- Members were interested in understanding how the Minister plans to work with Minister Butler and the State and Territory Governments to implement reforms towards a seamless system of support.

Attendees

Australian Federation of Disability Organisations, Autistic Self Advocacy Network of Australia and New Zealand, Blind Citizens Australia, Brain Injury Australia, Carers Australia, Children and Young People with Disability Australia, Community Mental Health Australia, Deaf Australia, Deafblind Australia, Disability Advocacy Network Australia, Down Syndrome Australia, Every Australian Counts, Inclusion Australia, JFA Purple Orange, Mental Health Australia, National Ethnic Disability Alliance, National Mental Health Consumer and Carer Forum, People with Disability Australia, Physical Disability Australia, ReImagine Australia, Self Advocacy Resource Unit, Women with Disabilities Australia, Young People in Nursing Homes National Alliance, Australian Autism Alliance, Deafness Forum Australia

Apologies: A4 Autism Aspergers Advocacy Australia

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