25 September 2025

The National Disability Insurance Agency has taken a major step towards creating a simpler, fairer pathway for NDIS Participants to access the disability supports they need.

The NDIA has procured a license for a new needs assessment tool, known as the Instrument for Classification and Assessment of Support Needs (I-CAN) version 6.

The NDIS Review recommended a better, clearer planning process to assess disability support needs and build plan budgets.

This tool will make it easier for people with disability and their families to navigate the NDIS. It will focus on a participant's disability support needs rather than functional impairments.

It will be used by trained, accredited assessors, who will meet with participants aged 16 and over, to help assess their disability support needs, as part of the New Planning Framework under the NDIS Act.

The tool will be applied alongside questionnaires assessing each individual's personal and environmental circumstances. Further targeted assessments will be used for people with more complex disability support needs.

It has been refined over 20 years and is used in programs including the national Disability Support for Older Australians program.

Its selection follows a competitive procurement process, supported by a disability lived experience expert advisory group.

The University of Melbourne has partnered with the Centre for Disability Studies to provide the I-CAN.

The two bodies will work with the NDIA to use and modify the tool to ensure it is fit-for-purpose within the scheme.

The new framework will be introduced in stages from mid-2026. The staged rollout is designed to allow participants to provide real-time feedback.

Quotes attributable to Senator Jenny McAllister, Minister for the National Disability Insurance Scheme:

"It's fantastic that an Australian innovation will make the NDIS fairer, simpler, and just plain easier for people to use."

"It can take a long time and cost a lot of money for people to source supporting evidence to have a planning meeting. There is a better way."

“This is a crucial step towards ensuring that we use the latest technology to make sure that we meet the needs of Australians with disability.”

Quotes attributable to University of Melbourne Professor of Mental Health System Reform Jason Thompson:

"The University of Melbourne is proud to partner with the Centre for Disability Studies so we can both help the NDIA develop an assessment process that is grounded in evidence and lived experience and will uphold values of validity, fairness and transparency.”

“This collaboration shows how strong research partnerships can translate into practical, real-world solutions.”

Quotes attributable to Centre for Disability Studies CEO Associate Professor Mary-Ann O’Donovan:

“We are immensely proud to see the I-CAN v6 assessment tool adopted as the starting point in the development of the NDIA’s new approach to assessing the support needs of NDIS participants.”

“This evidence-based and person-centred tool has been researched and refined here in Australia over many years. We look forward to working with the disability community and the NDIA to further refine the tool for use in the new assessment process."

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