18 June 2025

The Autism Advisory Group met on 18 June 2025 for the third meeting of the year. The meeting was held online.

Focus of the meeting

The focus of the June meeting was:

- Terms of reference and workplan review
- Navigators
- Funding periods.

Terms of Reference and Workplan review

- The Terms of Reference and Workplan were provided to members with suggested edits by the NDIA secretariat team.
- The Group endorsed the updated Terms of Reference, and requested further topics suggested by members to be added to the Workplan.

Navigators

The NDIA gave a presentation to members on the progress of the design of the new navigator role. This navigator role is to provide:

- Services to people with disability and participants
- Access to high-quality, accessible, and relevant information that is provided in clear and understandable formats.

The Group discussed the proposed key functions of a navigator, as well as activities that will be out of scope for the new role. Members provided the following feedback:

- The skills, competency, qualifications, and training required for the navigator workforce might result in professionals moving away from other crucial supports participants require and create further market issues.
- Concerns for potential or perceived conflicts of interest.
- The importance of high- quality workforce capability in supporting participants and people with disability to maximise positive outcomes.

The NDIA advised that further discussions with the Group on the role of navigators, specialist roles and market design will occur.

Funding periods

The NDIA provided an overview of funding periods policy and invited a discussion with members about the implementation of this new policy over the first two months.

The overview covered:

- Funding periods are a new requirement under changes to section 33 of the NDIS Act in October 2024.
- From 19 May 2025 the Agency started to introduce funding periods of less than 12 months in participant plans.
- A funding period is the length of time that a part of a participant's funding is made available, and how long the funding needs to last.
- The purpose of funding periods is to help participants manage their supports over time and avoid running out of funding too early. It is also important way the Agency can help protect participants from financial exploitation.
- The NDIA wants to move to longer term plans and funding periods are key to this reform.
- Under the NDIS Act, funding periods can be no longer than 12 months.
- The NDIA sets the length and proportion of funds in funding periods in line with NDIS laws, taking into account a participant's individual needs and circumstances.

Summary of discussion included:

- There is strong community feedback in relation funding period default settings, in particular 3-month funding periods. The NDIA confirmed there is no default setting for any particular support or cohort.

  Lack of clarity in available communications. The NDIA acknowledged further refinement in communications is required.
- The NDIA explained that the feedback gathered from families and delegates indicated that if explained well, the funding periods have been received positively, particularly with families of young children. Members suggested widening the scope for comprehensive explanation and education on funding periods and using scenarios to support these communications.
- NDIA acknowledged that communication is key, including explaining how the decision has been made and why.
- The NDIA acknowledged that continuous improvement with delegates is vital to ensure decision making is consistent with guidance.

Autism Advisory Group next meeting

The Autism Advisory Group’s next meeting is on 7 August 2025.

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