28 August 2025

The Children’s Expert Advisory Group (CEAG) met for their ninth meeting on Thursday 28 August 2025.

The meeting was held online.

Focus of the meeting

The Chair, Jo Wickes, Acting General Manager, Children’s Strategy and Services, National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA) opened the meeting.

The meeting focused on an update from the Department of Health, Disability and Ageing (DHDA) on the Thriving Kids initiative. The NDIA presented an introduction to early thinking of the design of the potential future Navigator service. A planned item from the NDIA on feedback from an out-of-session workshop held on 4 August 2025 on the design of the new NDIS children’s pathway (0-8yrs) was deferred, noting the Thriving Kids initiative will be considered in the design.

Update on Thriving Kids

The Department of Health, Disability and Ageing (DHDA) provided an update on the Thriving Kids initiative, announced by the Australian Government on 20 August 2025.

- There is a significant focus in the initiative on identifying developmental concerns as early as possible in the journey for children aged 8 and under with low to moderate support needs associated with developmental delay or autism.
- Children who meet the NDIS access criteria for substantial functional impairment will continue to be supported through the NDIS.
- There is a commitment to continue to engage with families and carers, the disability community and representative organisations in the design of Thriving Kids and to facilitate services at the earliest opportunity.
- Minister Butler has advised of intentions to have services commence from 1 July 2026. The final program design will be settled between the Australian Government and state and territory governments.

CEAG member feedback included:

- The design needs to consider the most vulnerable, including children from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds and socio-economically disadvantaged families, to ensure that children do not miss out on support.
- Members emphasised the importance of evaluation in the design work.

- Members suggested accessible communication on Thriving Kids such as fact sheets and frequently asked questions be developed.

Introduction to future Navigator service design

The NDIA provided an introduction on early thinking on the design of a potential future Navigator service (recommended in the final report of the Independent Review of the NDIS, 2023) and sought member feedback to ensure the design best supports children.

- Members emphasised that the design should incorporate a key principle of being outcomes focused rather than service focused.
- Members reiterated that personal and relationship building skills are crucial. They discussed the broad knowledge that will be required for professionals undertaking the potential Navigator role, including what is required for understanding individual circumstances and knowledge of service systems. Significant knowledge and training across disabilities and early childhood development was identified by members as essential.
- Members discussed the highly nuanced work required to fulfill the role, advising that one role cannot be expected to know everything and suggested clear parameters to ensure that referrals to other Navigator roles are completed as required.
- A CEAG consultation workshop dedicated to potential future Navigator service design is scheduled for 11 September 2025.

New children’s pathway design

Due to time constraints, the Group agreed to a dedicated out of session workshop on the new children’s pathway which will incorporate the service ecosystems journey maps and a high-level discussion on the intersection with Thriving Kids.

CEAG Next Meeting

CEAG will meet again on 16 October 2025. This meeting will be held online.

Related articles

Category

- Children’s Expert Advisory Group communique

Children’s Expert Advisory Group Meeting October 2025

Date
16 October 2025

Children’s Expert Advisory Group meeting summary July 2026

Date
16 July 2026
Category

- Children’s Expert Advisory Group communique

Children’s Expert Advisory Group Meeting July 2025

Date
10 July 2025
Read more news