7 April 2026

The Rural and Remote Advisory Group met on Tuesday, 7 April 2026.

The meeting was held online.

Focus of the meeting

The focus of the April 2026 meeting was:

- NDIA update.
- First Nations Strategy.
- Support Needs Assessments.
- Sharp practices.

NDIA update

- The NDIA continues to work on the new way of planning. Updates about this work are on our A new way of planning page.
- The NDIS Quality Supports Program Therapy Pilot will be held over 12 months. NDIS providers will give feedback to help the NDIS price high-quality supports in the future.
- The NDIA has created a Dog Guide Provider List to give participants better access to dog guide services and compare providers.
- The NDIS quarterly report for 1 October to 31 December 2025 is now available. The report shares data about the NDIS and stories from participants.

First Nations Strategy

The NDIA First Nations Strategy will run until 2030. The Strategy has 4 goals which focus on improving outcomes for First Nations participants in urban, regional and remote Australia.

The NDIA held meetings across Australia with communities, service providers and governments to inform the Strategy. People provided feedback on how the NDIS is working and what needs to change. Feedback from these meetings included:

- Some providers are not being culturally safe when they work with participants in communities.
- There are not enough service providers in regional and remote areas.
- The NDIS needs to improve how they communicate by using Aboriginal English and other languages that are spoken in communities.

Support needs assessments update

The NDIA is testing the new NDIS support needs assessments with participants.

Testing has included:

- Desktop simulations. NDIA staff use real participant information to understand how budgets can be created based on a person's needs.
- Practice support needs assessments with real participants.

Member feedback included:

- There is a shortage of interpreting services like Auslan in regional and remote areas. This can make it difficult to know if the right information is being recorded.
- There are not enough qualified staff to do the support needs assessments in regional and remote areas.
- Some participants will need to do the assessment over a few shorter sessions instead of one long session.
- Information about support needs assessments needs to be available in Easy Read and other languages.

Sharp practices

The NDIA led a discussion on how to stop sharp practices in rural and remote areas.

Sharp practices can be when providers overcharge for services or charge for services they did not deliver. It also includes charging NDIS participants more than the general public or offering incentives, or payments, to convince participants to use their goods or services.

Members said the NDIA should:

- Educate and support participants early in the planning process to understand what good supports look like.
- Work with local community groups to provide education to people in rural and remote areas about sharp practices and how to avoid them.
- Grow local support coordination services. Support coordinators can help participants find honest and reliable support services.

Next meeting

The next RRAG meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, 2 June 2026.

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