16 July 2026

The Children’s Expert Advisory Group (CEAG) met on 16 July 2026. The final meeting was held online.

Focus of the meeting

The focus of the meeting was:

- Shaping Children’s Reform – CEAG contributions.
- Early Childhood Intervention (ECI) market analysis project.
- The Department of Health, Disability and Ageing (DHDA) update on Thriving Kids.

NDIA update

- The Government announced a plan to secure the future of the NDIS.
- The Government has announced it will introduce legislation following the release of the 2026-27 Budget.
- More information on the changes the Government has announced is available here Securing the NDIS for future generations factsheet .
- The changes announced by the Minister will not take effect until the legislation is passed. Until then, current NDIS eligibility and planning policies remain in place.
    - Participants should continue to access their disability-related supports and services as outlined in their existing NDIS plans.
- DHDA has published a Securing the NDIS for future generations timeline that shows when changes are expected and when consultation will happen with participants, providers and the disability community.
    - Some timelines depend on the Bill being passed.
- The NDIS Quarterly Report Q3 2025–26 for 1 January to 31 March 2026 is now available.
- The report shares data about the NDIS and stories from participants and shows improvements in outcome measures across a number of domains relating to children and carers.
- To find out more:
    - Read the full report.
    - Explore more data with our interactive data tool .
    - Learn more about the main disability types in the NDIS with our participant dashboards .
- The NDIA has published an updated price schedule taking effect from 1 July 2026.
- The term ‘Short term respite’ has been changed back to ‘short-term accommodation’ in response to feedback from the community.

- The new pricing schedule separates short-term accommodation into different components.
- The accommodation component includes separate items for participant and support worker accommodation.
- The hours of support provided by a support worker component will enable claims to reflect:
    - Actual hours of support delivered.
    - The timing of supports.
    - The intensity of the support provided.
- The change makes sure that funding is only used for NDIS supports.
- Funding for STA cannot be used to pay for:
    - Holiday packages.
    - Holiday accommodation.
    - Airfares, food or meals.
    - The costs associated with activities and entrance fees.
- You can find out more on What is short-term accommodation.

Member feedback included:

- Members said that NDIA planners are holding planning meetings with participants without notice, despite the NDIA advising that planners this is not the correct process.
- Members reported that some participant's plans have been reduced before the Bill has been passed.
- The NDIA confirmed that access and planning decisions continue under existing legislation and there have been no changes to policy, process or decision-making guidance in advance of the Bill becoming law.

Shaping Children's Reform – CEAG contributions

Following a review of the Terms of Reference, the NDIA will close CEAG after this meeting.

The NDIA thanked members for their commitment and for sharing their knowledge, expertise and lived experience over the past 2 years.

The NDIA acknowledged the valuable advice and feedback that members provided to help shape the children's reforms.

The Department of Health, Disability and Ageing (DHDA) now leads policy and design for key areas of the NDIS reform, including:

- Early childhood intervention policy.
- The design and implementation of Thriving Kids.

The NDIA will continue to deliver services and supports in line with government policy and intended outcomes.

Member feedback included:

- Members noted that the group identified issues, provided practical advice and helped improve the NDIS beyond policy and design.
- Members encouraged the NDIA to keep seeking input from people with experience and expertise in the needs of children, young people and families as reforms continue.
- Members are concerned that important feedback could be missed, leading to gaps in implementation of children’s reforms.
- Members said they are willing to engage with DHDA ongoing to support best practice design and policy development for children reforms.

The NDIA reflected on some of CEAG’s advice, insight and impact across the children’s reform.

CEAG’s work will continue to support children’s reforms by helping the NDIA work effectively with DHDA.

- The group developed guiding principles for policy and reform to help the NDIA make decisions about supports for children and young people.
    - NDIA teams continue to use these principles in their work.
- Throughout its term, the group highlighted the need to:
    - Build workforce capability.
    - Plan implementation well.
    - Make it easier for children and families to navigate the system.
- The group’s focus on best practice helped shape many NDIA initiatives.

The NDIA asked members to share their reflections on their engagement throughout CEAG’s term.

Member feedback included:

- Members encouraged the NDIA to continue to focus on the key principles of the best practice framework for early intervention to support NDIA initiatives.
- The NDIA and DHDA should embed the guiding principles for policy and reform into its policy development processes and knowledge resources.
- Members acknowledged:
    - CEAG’s important contribution to key pieces of work.
    - The respectful way members shared different views and worked through issues together.
    - The support of NDIA staff who recognise and value CEAG’s expertise.
    - The challenge of bringing CEAG’s advice into policy decisions.

    - The value of bringing together people with professional knowledge and lived experience.
- Members highlighted CEAG’s advice on defining substantial developmental delay for the purposes of access to the NDIS as a key achievement.
    - This advice helped inform the NDIA’s work on the access pathway for children younger than 9 seeking access to the NDIS.

Early Childhood Intervention (ECI) market analysis project

The NDIA has commenced an Early Childhood Intervention (ECI) market analysis project.

Research is underway on the early childhood market to better understand:

- What exists now.
- What the market needs to be.
- How to prepare for Thriving Kids.

Member feedback included:

- Clear information helps families make informed decisions about the supports that best meet their children’s needs.
- Government should look at provider registration and make sure it considers the quality of supports providers deliver.
- Members shared concerns about whether there will be enough therapists to meet the demand.
- Members noted that the system should help children and families to achieve positive outcomes, including acceptance, independence, citizenship, and purpose. This includes:
    - Community led initiatives to support inclusion and community participation.
    - Parent peer support and parent peer work.
    - Specialised supports when needed.
- Members highlighted the need for an auditing system that encourages and recognises best-practice early childhood intervention.
- Members noted that any future workforce strategy should:
    - Be consistent, sustainable, financially viable and aligned to best practice.
    - Consider how providers can work across both NDIS and Thriving Kids services.

Department of Health, Disability and Ageing update on Thriving Kids

DHDA gave an update on Thriving Kids.

Thriving Kids will deliver a national system of supports for children aged 8 years old and under with developmental delay and/or autism with low to moderate support needs, and their families, carers and kin.

Discussion points included:

- The Thriving Kids national model.
- How DHDA is delivering Thriving Kids with states and territories.
- An overview of Commonwealth investment.
- The work DHDA is doing with states and territories to prepare for a National Communication Campaign.

Member feedback included:

- Members encouraged DHDA to work with parent leaders, peer-led organisations and professionals. These groups can help DHDA make sure communications reflect:
    - Current approaches to early childhood intervention.
    - Available community supports.
    - The important role families play in supporting children.
- Members encouraged DHDA to make sure communications are easy to understand, accessible and suitable for people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.
- Members encouraged DHDA not to duplicate available resources.
- Members noted that using a mix of communications channels and formats would help information reach more children, families and communities.

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