4 August 2026

The Rural and Remote Advisory Group met on Tuesday, 4 August 2026.

The meeting was held online.

Focus of the meeting

The focus of the August meeting was:

- Annual Pricing Review.
- Opportunities for testing the new way of planning.
- Thriving Kids.
- New way of planning in remote and very remote areas.
- Cultural safety in staff capability.

Annual Pricing Review update

The NDIA provided an update on the 2026–27 Annual Pricing Review (APR).

Key updates included:

- Changes were made to pricing arrangements in regional areas.
    - Travel limits have increased, allowing therapists to travel further to see participants in regional locations.
- The NDIA will monitor claiming patterns to understand the impact of pricing changes.
- The NDIA will release an APR survey in August 2026 and encouraged members to share it through their networks when available.

Member feedback included:

- Consider the different workforce models used by providers when analysing costs and pricing.
- Include smaller providers in regional and remote areas in future pricing review activities.

Opportunities for testing the new way of planning

The NDIA shared an update on participant testing for the new way of planning and the support needs assessment (SNA).

Key updates included:

- Testing has increased significantly since late 2025.Face-to-face testing has started in remote locations.
- The NDIA is seeking to test the participant experience across different cohorts, including participants:
    - Who are First Nations.
    - From culturally and linguistically diverse communities.
    - Who are LGBTQIA+.
    - Living in regional, remote and very remote locations.
    - Who use assistive technology or Specialist Disability Accommodation (SDA).
    - Who require interpreter support.
    - Aged 18-25 years.
    - With a plan value of more than $150,000.
- Participants can register to take part in testing activities and are paid for their participation. You can find out more information on NDIS Engage .

Member feedback included:

- Assessors should understand how disability impacts people living in rural and remote communities.
- Members emphasised the importance of culturally safe assessment approaches.
- Members supported using staff with local knowledge and experience in remote communities.

New way of planning in remote and very remote areas

The NDIA consulted members on a proposed approach for delivering the new way of planning in rural and remote communities.

The NDIA advised that it intends to maintain the key features of its current Remote Service Delivery Framework, including strong community relationships and participant support. The proposed approach includes:

- Preparing communities before implementation.
- Supporting participants to prepare for their assessment.
- Involving trusted people during assessments where appropriate.
- Using local knowledge when making planning and budget decisions.
- Providing ongoing support during plan implementation.

Member feedback included:

- Face-to-face assessments should be the preferred option where possible.

- Assessors should have skills and experience relevant to different disability types.
- Assessment processes should minimise personal bias and support consistent decision-making.
- Participants need clear pathways to raise concerns about assessment quality or assessor capability.

Thriving Kids update

The Department of Health, Disability and Ageing provided an update on the Thriving Kids national model.

Key updates included:

- Thriving Kids aims to improve support for children with developmental delay and their families.
- The model focuses on:
    - Early identification and awareness.
    - Information and navigation support.
    - Parenting and family support.
    - Targeted therapeutic supports.
- The principles of the model are:
    - Child and family-centred, strength and evidenced-based and neuro-affirming.
    - Delivered by appropriately skilled workforces and in places where children live, learn and play.
    - Flexible, culturally appropriate and accessible for all children, including First Nations, CALD and remote-based children.
- A national phone and online advice service is expected to be available from October 2026.
- The Commonwealth will also support workforce development, digital systems and public awareness activities.

Member feedback included:

- Digital and phone-based supports can improve access and consistency in remote areas when combined with local support.
- Some communities have limited access to phones, devices and internet services.
- Local radio, posters and word of mouth are effective ways for communities in rural and remote locations to receive information.
- Supports should also consider children who are unable to attend school regularly.

Cultural safety in staff capability

The NDIA provided an update on cultural safety initiatives for staff.

Key updates included:

- Cultural safety is being embedded into organisational policies, leadership practices and service design.
- Cultural safety capability is also being incorporated into the work on the new way of planning.

Member feedback included:

- Members welcomed the focus on cultural safety.
- Members raised concerns about ensuring service providers deliver culturally safe supports.
- Participants, families and kin should have access to information that explains what culturally safe services should look like from both NDIA staff and providers.

Next meeting

The next RRAG meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, 6 October 2026.

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