

Participant First experience 'electrifying and powerful' for disability advocate and NDIS participant Gavin

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South Australian NDIS participant and disability advocate Gavin Burner, 56, of Park Holme, is enthusiastic about his role in helping to shape the NDIS and improve the Scheme.

As a member of the Participant First Engagement Initiative (PF) and Participant Reference Group (PRG), Gavin has been involved in several workshops, focus groups and surveys over the past few years.

"I feel that they do listen, I feel that they are trying, and I feel like people with disability, people like me, are like uncles and aunts who give advice to the NDIA," said Gavin, who has an intellectual disability and is hard of hearing.

"Do they get it right all the time from us? No, but I do think the people we talk to do listen and give us a chance to put our point across.

"I remember when I had a meeting for the PRG, and there were maybe 15 people in a room (before COVID-19). I said, 'this is electrifying, this is powerful'. I felt like we were really making a difference."

Gavin is employed as an inclusion worker with the South Australian Council on Intellectual Disability and also recently joined the Intellectual Disability Reference Group, a sub-committee of the NDIS Independent Advisory Council (IAC).

He says his role in advising the NDIA has boosted his confidence, both in himself and the Scheme.

"I've been involved in quite a number of surveys and I always get good feedback and it really makes me feel like I've been heard," he said.

"What it's done for me, to be part of the NDIA is first, 'Wow! Can I do this?', second, it got me confident that I have a voice and, third thing, it gave me confidence I can achieve things in my life.

"I think the NDIS is new and it's going to take years to get it right, but they are listening. I have seen things I've been involved with, like the Let's Talk about Work booklet, and I thought it was really powerful and the people in the PRG like me thought they'd been heard and thought they'd been listened to."

Find out more about the [Participant First](#) program.

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