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South Australian NDIS participant and disability advocate Gavin Burner was enthusiastic about his role in helping to shape the NDIS and improve the Scheme.

Gavin sadly passed away in July 2025, after a short illness.

For those who didn’t know Gavin, he was a much loved and valued member of the Independent Advisory Council.

We remember his strong voice, advocating for people with disability. We remember his expertise about how we can improve our services in rural and remote areas.

Gavin will have a long-lasting impact on the Scheme. Helping us improve accessibility and inclusion is just one part of his legacy. We’re a better Scheme because of Gavin’s contributions.

With kind permission from his family, Gavin’s story and experience remains published on the NDIS website in remembrance of his advocacy to improve the NDIS.

As a member of the Participant First Engagement Initiative (PF) and Participant Reference Group (PRG), Gavin had 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 had an intellectual disability and was 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 worked as an inclusion worker with the South Australian Council on Intellectual Disability. He was also a member of the Intellectual Disability Reference Group, a sub-committee of the NDIS Independent Advisory Council (IAC).

He said his role in advising the NDIA had 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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