

JOINT MEDIA STATEMENT

Co-design and foundations essential to get NDIS right

A group of National Disability Representative Organisations (DROs) believe the changes announced in Federal Parliament to amend the National Disability Insurance Scheme Act 2013, can only work if people with disability and our families, supporters, communities and organisations are front and centre in their design, with the appropriate foundations in place.

The NDIS delivers lifesaving and life changing supports for over 600,000 people with disability across Australia. However, 88% of people with disability are not getting support in the NDIS, or in the community, more so for First Nations peoples who are often forced to choose between culturally inappropriate supports or none at all.

The NDIS Review, released in December 2023, recommended a new disability ecosystem to make sure that all people with disability could get the support they need, when and where they need it.

This new legislation delivers only part of the changes needed to achieve this, with no sign of the additional services and supports that people with disability will rely on.

The Bill covers two groups of changes. The first group is about the ideas recommended by the NDIS Review on planning and budget-setting processes. The Federal Government needs to work out the details of the legislative instruments before any changes happen and has committed to codesigning these changes with the disability community.

The second group is about more immediate changes to the NDIS, including new rules for planning, information-sharing and services. There are also some changes about quality and safeguarding to address urgent issues around participant safety and provider fraud.

DROs will examine in detail the technical changes in the new NDIS legislation to confirm that no person with disability will go without appropriate support, as these reforms are implemented. The NDIS legislative instruments will contain more information about the changes, and our organisations will look at them closely when they are released.

The NDIS legislation will now go to be reviewed by a Parliamentary Committee, and DROs will engage with Senators and MPs to ensure that the full impact of these changes on people with disability is outlined.

When the NDIS Review final report was released, our organisations said that ‘continued access to support for people with disability is necessary and non-negotiable. Any changes to how support is provided, either inside or outside the Scheme, must not lead to any gaps in the support we receive.’ Today, we restate this categorically.

People with disability and our families, supporters, communities and disability representative organisations, disabled peoples’ organisations and disability advocacy organisations must be at the table to co-design and develop the future of the NDIS.

Our organisations also call on all states and territories to work with us, and with the Federal Government, as agreed at National Cabinet in December 2023, to develop and fund the essential supports that so many people with disability are missing out on.

Priority needs to be given to facilitate and amplify the voices of First Nations people with disability to improve the culturally responsive and appropriate nature of the NDIS and associated supports. First Nations people have been clear, this can only be achieved through dedicated mechanisms that actively seek to break down silos across the NDIS, disability policy and Closing the Gap landscapes.

Fully accessible mainstream public services, such as education, health and transport, alongside targeted supports for people with disability outside the NDIS, are absolutely necessary parts of disability reform.

The huge changes coming from the Disability Royal Commission and the NDIS Review have the potential to change the lives of people with disability across the country, to end abuse and violence, and to ensure fair and equitable services and supports.

The time to act is now and the way to act is with us.

This statement was prepared by Disability Advocacy Network Australia, in their role as the National Coordination Function for the Disability Representative Organisations program. The following organisations have contributed to and endorsed this joint statement:

- Children and Young People with Disability Australia
- First Peoples Disability Network Australia
- Disability Advocacy Network Australia
- Inclusion Australia
- National Ethnic Disability Alliance
- People with Disability Australia
- Women with Disabilities Australia