29 April 2025

What we talked about

Topic 1: Reset of co-design for NDIS reforms, working group ways of working

The NDIA discussed the changes to the co-design working group, explained the focus on new framework planning, and asked for any feedback on the Terms of Reference or how the group could work together.

Topic 2: Co-design workplan

The NDIA drafted a workplan to outline in scope and out of scope deliverables, and co-design/engagements activities to support the initiative. Due to time constraints, it was agreed this would be a topic for a separate dedicated session.

Topic 3: Guiding principles for the budgeting approach

The NDIA presented a draft of 10 guiding principles that would be used to guide the budget model for feedback.

What we heard

- The group asked for clarity of scope and role of the group. It was confirmed the group will be planning co-design activities, giving direct feedback about key topics, considering insights from other engagement activities related to the workplan.
- The group asked for clarity about what and how they can share with their networks to allow for more informed discussions, to support the NDIA to co-design more broadly and let the group promote activities with their networks.
- There is a need to develop a better way of working. The group discussed:
    - 2 hours a month online can be challenging for the voices of all to be heard and achieve workplan deliverables.
    - The group is still understanding how each person works and how to best work together.
    - ideas about how the group could come together to build a strong working relationship and be more productive.
- The group all agreed in calling out the principle of “Consistent”:

  - They said the dollar amount of a budget shouldn't necessarily be similar between similar participants. This is not a reliable benchmark for fairness and equity.
  - The complexity of individual budgets means there aren't two people with "the same circumstances".
  - They advised that the process and decision making needs to be fair and equitable.
  - The NDIA needs to be fair and transparent with participants about how budgets are calculated, so that participants understand their total budget amount shouldn't be compared to that of others.
- The group questioned why certain principles like Human Rights were not included. It was agreed:
  - Principles that apply to the NDIS Act also apply to budget method, we should not duplicate these, but a statement should be made to clarify the relationship between the principles and the Act.
  - The NDIA should review these principles in context with the Act.
- The group discussed how goals would inform budgets:
  - The NDIA proposed some goals, not all, would inform budgets – there was concern there would be difficulty aligning this with person-centred and holistic practice.
  - The group agreed NDIA should be clear about which goals would have an impact on budgets, and how.
- Group members discussed principles that are contradictory.
  - It was agreed there are tensions between some principles. This needs to be acknowledged, particularly relating to 'Consistent', 'Individualised' and 'Financial Sustainability'.
  - The NDIA should be clear about the detail of how the principles will be used when there are conflicting priorities.
- The group discussed the principle that contained financial sustainability:
  - They said it shouldn't be the sole responsibility of participants.
  - They said financial impacts should consider the whole of government and related spending.
- They asked about "cultural safety" and how it would be used. They discussed the possible meanings of "culture" and asked the NDIA to be clear about it.
- Group members suggested proactive mitigation of risks to participants could be used. This might mean making sure participants have enough funds to quickly replace damaged supports.
- The group asked about what work has been done, and whether the model has been developed.
  - The NDIA advised the budget model has not been developed and will be very different to current state.
  - 'Typical Support Packages' will not be used as the basis for setting participant budgets in new framework planning.
- They advised thorough communication was needed from the NDIA to explain the changes, and answer questions to participants, providers and the sector.

What we agreed to do

- Finalise and disseminate the Terms of Reference.
- Schedule session to work through the revised workplan, noting this was an optional session.
- Review budget principles in context of the NDIS Act to make sure they work together and don’t duplicate.
- NDIA to review the budget principles presented based on the group’s feedback.

Who we met with

Participants, Disability Representative and Carer Organisations, Independent Advisory Council and Reference Group members, subject matter experts and NDIA staff.

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