30 May 2025

Quarterly Reform Forum – Meeting Outcomes

Session details:

Friday 30 May 2025, 10:00am-3:00pm AEST

Disability Representative and Carers Organisation (DRCO) Attendees:

Australian Autism Alliance, Australian Federation of Disability Organisations, Autistic Self Advocacy Network of Australia and New Zealand, Blind Citizen Australia, Brain Injury Australia, Children and Young People with Disability Australia, Community Mental Health Australia, Deaf Australia, Deafblind Australia, Deafness Forum Australia, Disability Advocacy Network Australia, Down Syndrome Australia, Every Australian Counts, Inclusion Australia, JFA Purple Orange, Mental Health Australia, National Ethnic Disability Alliance, National Mental Health Consumer and Carer Forum, Physical Disability Australia, ReImagine Australia, Self Advocacy Resource Unit, Women with Disabilities Australia, Young People in Nursing Homes National Alliance

Independent Advisory Council (IAC) Attendees:

Leah van Poppel, Vaughn Bennison, Dr Sharon Boyce, Assoc. Professor Lorna Hallahan, Dr Leighton Jay, Tricia Malowney, Sam Paior, Mark Tonga, Andrew Vodic, and Jane Wardlaw.

National Disability Insurance Agency Attendees:

Jamie Bannister, Kathy Cameron, Jarrad Cuthbert, Rebecca Falkingham, Elizabeth Fay, Julie Fayers, Anuj Mehra, Alex Rosenthal, Jackie Saddington, Cathy Stevens, Aaron Verlin, Phillip Wakefield, Clair Wheeler and Haylie Wernet

Apologies:

Gavin Burner (IAC), Dr Gill Hicks (IAC) and People with Disability Australia.

What we talked about

Topic 1: NDIA update

Aaron Verlin, General Manager Co-design and Engagement, provided the following update.

- The NDIA undertook a co-design reset in April 2025 to refocus efforts on four key areas to support the delivery of the new NDIS planning pathway:
  - Assessments and Budgeting
  - Navigators
  - Participant Pathway Experience, and
  - Participant Safeguarding.
- The co-design Home and Living, Workforce Capability, and Integrity working groups have paused. Reform work in these areas will continue through alternative engagement methods.
- The Agency recognises co-design needs to happen beyond the co-design working groups to ensure broader representation across disability types and regions. The Agency is committed to giving more people opportunity to contribute to co-design reform through Agency reference and advisory groups, and participant focus groups.
- The NDIA's reform agenda is structured into five Horizons from 2025 to post-2030. Horizon 1 focuses on key deliverables for 2025 including:
  - notice of impairments
  - support needs assessments
  - navigation design
  - workforce capability, and
  - how we communicate with participants about their budget.
- The NDIA is committed to providing the disability community greater visibility of its co-design activities. The Agency will publish monthly co-design summaries on the NDIS website, including key insights, actions and outcomes. It will also support organisations to share updates with members and networks.
- The Co-design Advisory Group is evaluating current NDIA co-design practices. It will focus on supporting internal and external capability to ensure Agency co-design remains genuine, inclusive, and continues to improve.

Topic 2: New participant pathway participant experience

The Access Planning and Pathway Branch provided an overview of the proposed participant experience of the new participant pathway, before leading breakout room consultation sessions with attendees.

The new pathway will create a more consistent, participant focused experience guided by trained needs support accessors. The approach prioritises clarity, continuity, and flexibility, while addressing stakeholder concerns about communication, decision-making support, and the emotional impact of change.

The new participant pathway has five key stages including:

- the notice of impairment
- preparing for a support needs assessment
- the support needs assessment meeting
- receiving a budget and plan, and
- actioning a plan.

What we heard

Summary of key insights and themes from the new participant pathway breakout room discussions:

- Clear communication is essential: Participants need simple, timely, and accessible information about each step of the process.
- Support for decision-making is critical: People must be supported to make informed choices, including those who may not traditionally receive decision-making support.
- Build trust through respect and continuity: Participants want to feel safe, respected, and understood. Need to embed trauma-informed, culturally safe practices.
- Assessment must be fair and flexible: One-size-fits-all tools won’t work. There needs to be flexibility for complex or changing needs.
- Clarify roles and improve navigation: The system must clearly explain who does what and when, and be easy to navigate.
- Identify and manage risks early: Risks include miscommunication, exclusion due to lack of evidence, and pressure to exaggerate needs.
- Co-design and sector collaboration matter: Participants and sector representatives want to help shape the process, test materials, and support outreach.

Topic 3: New participant pathway change approach

Julie Fayers, Branch Manager Strategic Change, delivered the final session on how to effectively manage and communicate the changes involved in transitioning participants to the new participant pathway.

Breakout room consultation was held to explore the types of support participants may need to navigate the upcoming changes.

What we heard

Summary of key insights and themes from the participant pathway change management breakout room discussions:

- Communicate clearly, early, and accessibly: Provide timely, plain-language information in accessible formats. Information should be framed around why it matters to participants, including reassuring participants they won't be worse off.
- Provide support and follow-up: Participants should have a named contact person or trusted organisation to work with them through the process. Supported decision-making and advocacy referrals should be built in.
- Use trusted messengers and empower peer networks: Deliver messages through peers, community leaders, and disability organisations. Create safe spaces for dialogue and enable two-way communication where participants can ask questions and be heard.
- Supported decision-making and trusted relationships: Enable participants to involve trusted supporters and provide access to independent, conflict-free advocacy.
- Co-design and pre-communication help: Co-design communication with the disability community including testing materials before publishing. Brief disability organisations and community leaders in advance so they can help explain the changes.
- Train and align the workforce: Ensure all staff are trained to deliver consistent messages.
- Ensure assessor capability: Ensure all assessors are trained in disability-specific, cultural, and trauma-informed approaches. Use multiple or specialist assessors when needed.
- Continuity, trust, and emotional safety: Ensure consistent personnel, adopt trauma-informed and culturally safe practices, and offer flexible meeting formats.
- Accessibility and transparency of information: Provide participants with access to their records and clear explanation of what the NDIA knows.

Actions

Action	Details	Responsibility
1	Agency to respond to questions taken on notice during the QRF	Co-design Branch
2	Provide update on Agency approach to sector representatives reviewing Agency communications before publication	Co-design Branch
3	Agency to share list of co-design working group membership	Co-design Branch

4	Agency to provide an updated outline of the engagement and consultation groups, including wider engagement activities which are planned.	Co-design Branch
5	Agency to hold information session on funding periods	Engagement and Inclusion Branch
6	Agency to share Horizon slides and provide written clearance for members to share the slides with networks	Co-design Branch
7	Ensure future meeting agenda provides greater detail about session formats	Co-design Branch
8	Agency to consider sharing co-design working group meeting actions prior to releasing the full meeting summary	NDIA
9	Agency to share information on proposed community sector update and monthly showcase sessions for state and territory disability organisations	Co-design Branch
10	Agency to capture information and questions from May QRF breakout rooms and provide summary of what we've heard	Co-design Branch

What we will do next

The next Quarterly Reform Forum will be held Tuesday 19 August, 10:00am to 3:00pm (Australian Eastern Standard Time).

Related articles

Quarterly Reform Forum meeting summary November 2025

Date
21 November 2025
Category

- News

Quarterly Reform Forum meeting summary Tuesday 19 August 2025

Date
19 August 2025
Category

- News

Reform for Outcomes quarterly meeting summary 14 February 2025

Date
26 May 2025
Read more news