29 July 2025

What we talked about

Topic 1: NDIA Gender Equity Strategy

The National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA) is currently developing a Gender Equity Strategy (the Strategy) to address gender disparities within the Scheme. According to the latest NDIS Quarterly Report, 38% of current participants in the Scheme are female, 1% are other, and 60% are male.

To ensure the Strategy is grounded in lived experience and expert insight, the NDIA is in the process of engaging with several stakeholders, including members of the Independent Advisory Council who identify as female, and Women With Disabilities Australia among others. The Agency is consulting with the Participant Safeguarding Co-design Working Group as part of these engagement activities.

Topic 2: Sector-led co-design approach update

Sector-led co-design activities have begun. People With Disability Australia (PWDA), Disability Advocacy Network Australia (DANA), Carers Australia and National Disability Services (NDS) are facilitating workshops with people with disability, families and carers, advocates and providers.

DANA is also partnering with others to reach key groups of participants. There has been a positive response to the workshops. We have heard participants feel safe and empowered to speak, appreciate conversations are led by trusted organisations and that emotional support is being provided as needed by professionals.

Topic 3: Looking back, looking forward

The co-chair facilitated a reflective conversation on how the group is tracking and what we are working on together. The group discussed what would follow the sector-led co-design activities and how they might guide future opportunities for co-design and consultation.

What we heard

NDIA Gender Equity Strategy

- It is important for women with a disability to be empowered and supported to share their experiences themselves and to be heard independently of others.

- The lives of women with a disability are shaped by a range of changing circumstances over time, which can impact their safety and wellbeing.
- Alongside the Gender Equity Strategy, members wanted to know more about the pathways linking the NDIA and other services that support women including family and domestic violence and homelessness supports.
  Sector-led co-design approach
- People use the term ‘carer’ in different ways, and there were mixed views about how it should be used when planning co-design workshops for specific groups. The working group committed to talking through the words and terms being used as part of the co-design to ensure clarity and consistency in meaning across diverse groups.
- Tailored co-design workshops with specific cohorts can help to build trust and allow for open, honest conversations about safety. However, it is important to ensure that the perspectives of providers and families are appropriately balanced with those of participants.
- Insights from the initial round of targeted co-design activities will inform the working groups approach to incorporating diverse perspectives and bringing a range of cohorts together in future.

What we agreed on

- The Commission will share resources and tools they have developed around gender-based violence, including a quality-of-life tool, with the NDIA.
- A draft strategy consultation paper for the NDIA Gender Equity Strategy will be released later this year and shared with the group.
- At the next meeting the group will further discuss how they might guide future opportunities for co-design and consultation.
- NDIA will provide links to new NDIS Scheme Reform Co-design Working Groups website pages to Working Group members.

What we will do next

- The Working Group will meet again on Tuesday, 22 July 2025, from 2-4pm (Australian Eastern Standard Time).

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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