24 October 2025

Quote from an attendee: "This experience has actually helped me build a bit more trust in the NDIS model."

What we talked about

This meeting was the final session of the Children's Pathway Parent and Carer Engagement Group. It focused on reflecting on the group's journey since March 2025, including the achievements, challenges and future directions.

NDIA highlighted the group's contributions and provided a summary of feedback and ideas shared by parents and carers over the past 10 workshops. The NDIA explained to parents and carers where their feedback has been included in the design of the pathway for children younger than 9, and where feedback was still under consideration.

NDIA provided information about future co-design work in 2026 and the importance of continuing to hear from the lived experience of parents and carers to inform the children's pathway.

In small groups, parents and carers shared their reflections on being a part of this group.

What we heard

- Parents and carers said they felt listened to and appreciated during the co-design process, and thanked NDIA staff for their empathy, responsiveness and genuine care.
- Many parents and carers felt deeply connected to the process and were sad to see the group's work come to an end.
- Parents and carers said they felt a strong sense of belonging in the group, especially for those who had felt isolated or had never been part of an engagement process before.
- Parents and carers said trust was built through consistent communication, safe spaces and genuine engagement. However, the unexpected Thriving Kids announcement from the Australian Government undermined this trust for some.
- Parents and carers would like more transparency and clearer communication about government processes, timelines, decision-making and constraints.
- Parents and carers would like the NDIA to provide a summary report that highlights how the group's feedback has been used and shared internally.
- Parents and carers were supportive of engagement activity continuing with parents and carers acknowledged the importance of hearing from more diverse voices including First Nations families, families living in rural and remote areas, and parents with a disability.

Feedback on the co-design and engagement process

- Parents and carers liked the use of smaller breakout rooms during the sessions, as they felt safer, more productive, and prepared for deeper sharing of lived experience.
- Narrative-based activities were sometimes harder to relate to.
- Parents and carers liked how flexible the sessions were and appreciated being able to share their thoughts by speaking aloud or using the chat.
- Parents and carers provided suggestions to improve the on-boarding process, including the NDIA better explaining government constraints and timelines.
- Suggestions for improvement included offering longer-term engagement opportunities, addressing the ‘car park’ topics which were raised by parents and carers as being increasingly important, and continuing to provide guiding questions for the small group discussions.

What we agreed on

- NDIA will continue to co-design and engage with diverse groups of parents and carers and value their lived experience.
- Parents and carers were invited to join a 1:1 interview with the NDIA to share any final thoughts, ideas and suggestions.
- NDIA will ensure parents and carers are informed of any future co-design and engagement opportunities.

Next meeting

The next Children’s Pathway Parent and Carer Engagement Group meeting is to be confirmed.

Who we met with

Fifteen parents and carers with a child in the scheme under the age of 9.

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