17 December 2025

From mid-2026, the NDIS planning process will begin changing to make it fairer, more consistent and easier for participants. This new approach is called new framework planning.

Thousands of people with disability, families, carers and providers told the Independent Review of the NDIS that planning needed to improve. The new way of planning reflects that feedback.

The Australian Government has updated the law so that these improvements and the recommendations from the NDIS Review can happen.

The NDIA and the Department of Health, Disability and Ageing (DHDA) have been working with state and territory governments and the disability sector to develop new framework planning rules.

Information about new framework planning rules can be found on the DHDA website.

What is changing?

Changes to the NDIS Act made in October 2024 enabled a new way of planning that is more consistent and focuses on a person's disability support needs, rather than functional impairment.

This will:

- use a person-centred and strengths-based approach
- create fairer and more consistent budgets
- reduce the need for expensive reports
- result in simpler plans that are more flexible for participants.

The aim is for the first participants to begin using the new planning approach from mid-2026.

It will be a phased introduction so for many participants they will not experience any change for some time.

What is a support needs assessment?

The support needs assessment is part of the new planning approach where a trained assessor works with a participant to understand their life and disability support needs.

Assessors will meet with the participant at a suitable time and place, and participants can bring their family, support people or carer.

The assessor will have a structured conversation with the participant about their daily life to identify what types of support they need. This will support fairer and more consistent budgets.

Once completed, the assessor will create and submit a final support needs assessment report. This will be used to build the budget in a participant's new NDIS plan.

Plans will always be approved by real people who are trained NDIS staff.

Under the new way we will create plans, NDIS staff will spend more time with participants than under the current approach.

The support needs assessment will be undertaken by trained and skilled assessors, who complete a training and accreditation program developed with the University of Melbourne and the Centre for Disability Studies.

New NDIS rules being developed by the DHDA will describe the new disability support needs assessment process.

What is the I-CAN v6?

The Agency will use the Instrument for the Classification and Assessment of Support Needs (I-CAN v6) as a base for developing the new support needs assessment.

The I-CAN v6 is a person-based and strengths-based tool that helps identify the disability related supports people need. It has been developed by the Centre for Disability Studies and has been used in the care sector for over 20 years.

The tool will be used alongside a new personal and environmental circumstances questionnaire, which will collect additional information required to understand a participant's support needs.

Some participants may be asked to provide reports from their treating health professionals if they have more complex support needs.

Budgets

A participant's reasonable and necessary budget must be determined by applying information contained in the needs assessment report in accordance with a method set out in the rules.

The new approach will create more flexible budgets compared to current plans which are based on individual supports.

In new framework plans, funding will be provided either as a stated item or as part of the flexible budget. Funding for stated supports must be used for a particular purpose or support,

while funding in the flexible budget can be used flexibly on NDIS supports.

Plans will cover longer periods, so participants will have more certainty and have fewer scheduled plan reviews, allowing them to get on with using their supports and living their lives.

Review rights

Participants will still be able to request a reassessment or variation of their plan if their circumstances change.

Participants will also continue to have the right to request a review of their plan, including through the Administrative Review Tribunal.

Participants can:

- request an internal review of their plan decision
- request an external review through the Administrative Review Tribunal (ART) if they are not satisfied with the internal review.

The rules and policy arrangements to support new framework planning are currently being developed in consultation with representatives from the disability community and state and territory governments.

How the disability community is involved

The disability community is helping design and test the new planning approach through workshops, forums and a Design Hub. The Design Hub tests planning activities with participants who have registered in the New Framework Planning Pool .

Over the past year, more than 100 engagements involving 7,000 participants, families, providers and other stakeholders have helped shape these changes. This collaboration will continue so people with disability have a strong voice in the process.

Co-design and advisory groups are in place to ensure lived experience is central to NDIS reform. Participant feedback will guide the design and implementation of the new planning framework.

Information will be shared regularly, and feedback will continue to shape the process to make sure these changes work well for participants.

Sessions called Understanding the NDIS: Overview of Changes to NDIS for Participants, Families and Carers are available for anyone who wants to learn more.

View the schedule and register at Understanding the NDIS sessions.

Rules consultation

Public consultation on rules for the new way of planning is now open until 6 March 2026. Feedback from this consultation will help inform the final version of the rules.

Find out more about the public consultation on the DHDA website .

Read more at Improving the NDIS.

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