21 November 2025

Friday 21 November 2025, 11:00am-4:00pm (AEDT)

Who we met with

Disability Representative and Carers Organisations (DRCO) attendees: Australian Autism Alliance, Australian Federation of Disability Organisations, Autistic Self Advocacy Network of Australia and New Zealand, Blind Citizens Australia, Brain Injury Australia, Carers Australia, Children and Young People with Disability Australia, Community Mental Health Australia, Deaf 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, People with Disability Australia, Physical Disability Australia, ReImagine Australia, Women with Disabilities Australia, Young People in Nursing Homes National Alliance.

Independent Advisory Council (IAC) attendees: Vaughn Bennison, Sharon Boyce, Assoc. Professor Lorna Hallahan, Dr Leighton Jay, Samantha Jenkinson, Danielle Loizou, Sam Paior, Mark Tonga, Leah van Poppel, Jane Wardlaw.

NDIA attendees: Jamie Bannister, Kathy Cameron, Fleur Campbell, Ellie Constantinou (session 5-7), Elizabeth Fay, Alex Rosenthal, Jackie Saddington, Bianca Seymour, Monica Sidhu (sessions 5-7), Carolyn Tetaz, Linda Trembearth-McMorrow, Phillip Wakefield and Clair Wheeler.

Apologies: Dr Gill Hicks, Susan Moore, Aaron Verlin, Andrew Vodic, Deafblind Australia, First Peoples Disability Network, and Self Advocacy Resource Unit.

What we talked about

Topic 1: NDIA update

Clair Wheeler, Acting General Manager, Co-design and Engagement, NDIA, provided the following update.

New way of planning

- The session focused on an update about the new way of planning, how the Agency is working with participants to test and refine the new approach, and updates on designing and delivering the support needs assessment, including the I-CAN tool.
- An overview of the new planning stages was provided, including:

    - preparing for the support needs assessment
    - the support needs assessment meeting
    - finalising an NDIS plan
    - using a plan

- The transition to the new way of planning will start with adults aged 18+ with less complex support needs. Children and participants with more complex needs will transition later.

  Participants have told the Agency they want:

    - clear, transparent communication about changes and timelines
    - person-centred, trauma-informed assessments that respect lived experience
    - flexibility and responsiveness in planning and budgeting
    - practical tools such as budget calculators and guidance for self-management
- The Agency acknowledged final details about who will transition and when are subject to consultation on NDIS Rules. Public consultation is being conducted by the Department of Health, Disability and Ageing.
- The Agency acknowledged anxiety in the community about the lack of detailed information.

Attendee feedback

- Members requested more information about the new way of planning, including the NDIA Design Hub and the I-CAN tool. Requests for meetings to discuss the support needs assessment had not been answered.
- Members called for more authentic engagement and co-design.
- Members called for co-design working group co-chairs to be invited to the QRF and for updates from both the NDIA and co-chairs to be reinstated as agenda items.
- A motion was proposed and supported to invite sector co-chairs of co-design working groups to future QRF meetings. The Agency took an action to add a standing agenda item for co-chair updates.

Topic 2: Scheme reform update

Carolyn Tetaz, Acting Branch Manager Co-design, and Alex Rosenthal, Branch Manager Engagement and Inclusion, provided the following update.

Working with the disability community

- The Agency acknowledged NDIA Reference and Advisory Groups as key consultation channels for NDIS reform in 2026.

Recent changes to groups include:

- new consultation groups established in the last year (First Nations, Parents and Carers, Culturally and Linguistically Diverse)
- establishment of the Rural and Remote Advisory Group, and Neurodegenerative, Palliative Care and Rare Diseases Advisory Group in 2025
- plans to form an LGBTIQASB+ Advisory Group in early 2026
- The Agency will use the new NDIS Engage online platform to support digital engagement.

Co-design, consultation and information sharing in 2026

- The Agency outlined 2026 priorities to implement the new way of planning and opportunities for engagement based on reflections from the 2025 co-design program.
- The Agency committed to reporting on actions taken in response to stakeholder insights.
- Work with the University of Melbourne and Centre for Disability Studies to refine the support needs assessment tool will begin in the second half of 2026.

Engagement program

- Engagement activities include:
  - public consultation on NDIS pricing via the Annual Pricing Review
  - public consultation on NDIS Rules from early 2026
  - expanded public and participant engagement, including increased webinars and regional events from February 2026
  - ongoing testing and targeted engagement on policy and guidance updates

NDIA Engagement Framework

- The Framework will be updated to clarify who engagement is for, how it occurs and why.
- Improvements will support inclusive and accessible engagement and align with Australian Public Service and international standards.
- Further work is required to develop planning, delivery and evaluation resources.

Topic 3: Participant Safeguarding

Jamie Bannister, Director Co-design, and Fleur Campbell, Director New Framework Policy, delivered an overview of Participant Safeguarding.

Feedback from recent co-design workshops highlighted the importance of trust, simplified systems, clear communication, flexibility and person-centred approaches. Insights will inform improvements to NDIA processes, tools and safeguarding responses.

What we heard

Key points raised in breakout sessions

- Interconnected priorities: safeguarding insights are interdependent and require concurrent action.
- Trust: rebuilding trust requires honest communication, timely responses and consistent engagement.
- Transparency: more detailed information sharing is needed, including sharing internal guidance where possible.
- Staff capability: trauma-informed practice, cultural safety and supported decision-making are essential.
- System complexity: clearer pathways are needed, especially in crisis situations.
- Connected ecosystem: wrap-around supports and cross-government collaboration are critical.
- Community connection: local presence, outreach and capacity-building improve safety.
- Accountability: dedicated funding, clear timelines and measurable outcomes are required.
- Inclusive design: accessibility and lived experience must be embedded throughout Scheme design.

Actions

Actions	Details	Responsibility
1	Provide an update on how sector representatives can review Agency communications before publication.	Co-design Branch
2	Invite sector co-chairs of co-design working groups to future QRF meetings and include updates as a standing agenda item.	Co-design Branch

3	Respond to questions taken on notice during the November QRF.	Co-design Branch
4	Provide advice about recruitment to NDIA Design Hub activities.	Co-design Branch
5	Share insights report from the Design Hub workshop held 17–18 November.	Co-design Branch
6	Schedule a briefing on the I-CAN tool with University of Melbourne and Centre for Disability Studies.	Co-design Branch
7	Provide an update on the status of paused co-design working groups.	Co-design Branch
8	Provide a proposal to bring together release co-chairs and advisory groups.	Engagement and Inclusion Branch
9	Share Participant Safeguarding insights report including consultation figures.	Co-design Branch
10	Confirm approach for evaluation of the new way of planning and contingency planning.	Co-design Branch

What we will do next

The next Quarterly Reform Forum will be held Thursday 19 February 2026, 11:00am to 4:00pm (Australian Eastern Daylight Time).

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