1 July 2025

This summary includes feedback from group members after the meeting.

# What we talked about

## Topic 1:

The NDIA shared the proposed Assessment and Budgeting workplan for the next 3 months.

## Topic 2:

The NDIA shared the Personal and Environmental Circumstances Questionnaire (PECQ) with the working group. The working group gave feedback to help design the new planning process.

# What we heard

**The role of the PECQ in future planning process.**

- The group discussed the role of the PECQ in the new planning process. It will:
  - Help understand informal supports
  - Give better understanding of a participant's day to day life
  - Identify changing life stages
  - Help understand changing support needs
  - Inform additional assessment modules
  - Consider goals
  - Identify risks and trigger safeguards.
- The NDIA wants the PECQ and assessment process to be equitable.
- The group discussed how the three elements of the support needs assessments, including the PECQ, would work together.
- The group asked how the PECQ reflects a participant's engagement in, or planned engagement in education or work in the future?
- The group questioned how the PECQ and assessment considers participant goals.
- The group called out the importance of co-designing the support needs assessment with the disability community.

## The format of the PECQ

- The group had concerns about the number of questions, especially when some questions wouldn’t be appropriate or relevant for everyone.
    - A “branching” method was discussed, where other questions might be asked based on a participant’s answer to an earlier question.
    - It was agreed this was important to make sure all the questions were relevant.
    - The branching method needs to be designed to ensure important information isn’t missed because a question wasn’t asked.
- The group discussed how the PECQ could be delivered. It was noted a survey format is not ideal for all participants.
    - The NDIA should consider how to combine observation, questions, and advocacy into the PECQ.
    - The NDIA should consider what formats might give the best results, including translating it into other languages.
      It is important for the PECQ to be in a variety of formats including, Auslan. This is important for both participants, and assessors with accessibility needs.
    - The NDIA confirmed their aim to make the PECQ as accessible to the entire participant community as possible. This included considering how it will be done with participants who don’t speak English.
- Cultural sensitivities should be considered. A participant’s personal circumstances need to be understood, taking their culture into account.
- Cultural sensitivities need to include the risk or fear of being isolated from a participant’s community because of responses or support needs.
- The language needs to be trauma informed, person centred and designed in a way that considers a social view of disability, rather than medical.
- Allowances for certain disability types need to be included such as “Don’t know/prefer not to answer” options to help inform the assessor’s approach.
- An optional feedback box after each section to flag distress, confusion, or emotional overload to inform ongoing improvements.

## Assessor skills

- The skills of the assessor are vital to the accuracy of the PECQ.
- Planners need to be trained in trauma-informed and culturally competent practice.
- Ask for private participant feedback on each interview experience to support learning and quality assurance.
- Consider partnering with government qualification review bodies, e.g. HumanAbility.

## Understanding informal supports

- A participant might not report the real situation due to fear, shame, or distrust.

- There is a risk the real level of informal support may not be understood through the PECQ alone.
- We need to consider the impact of informal supports, which can be different for people with different disabilities.
- Carer burnout, emotional load, willingness, and the fragility of these arrangements needs to be captured.
- Recognise cultural and relational factors, e.g. when care is expected, not volunteered.

## Understanding changing needs

- Changing needs are normal, not exceptional.
- There are many reasons needs can change that we need to understand. For example, ageing carers, life transitions, health deterioration, or breaks in informal networks.
- The PECQ can’t capture all of these and needs to be supported through direct engagement.

## Who can give answers

- It was noted some questions aren’t to be asked to the participant
- The group suggested there should be a way to reframe questions to make sure participants could have input.
  It was also discussed there could be trauma informed or safety considerations that mean some questions aren’t appropriate.
- Making sure the information collected was accurate, fair, and based on a human rights approach was important.
- The group suggested advocacy input be a core part of the PECQ.
- Self-reporting should only be part of the process and can’t be relied on to understand all of a participant’s support needs.

## The process

- Many existing participants have already shared a lot of the information captured in the PECQ. A way to validate existing information could be considered.
- Opportunities for the PECQ to give participants a chance to voice if they believe their rights are being unmet or breached should be included.
- The group asked about updating responses to the PECQ. It is intended the answers should reflect the whole plan duration but can be updated.
- A process to update answers, including self-serve options could be helpful for some participants.

- Participants should be able to review and download their PECQ responses to build trust and transparency in the process.

## Peer groups are important

- Peer groups are a source of information and experience sharing that can be more accessible than allied health and other professional supports.
- They can help participants understand the PECQ and how to represent themselves.
- They can help reduce anxiety and support participants who would find interviews overwhelming or inaccessible.
- Peer groups help build capacity, share information, and support social and community participation.
- Connection to peer groups and community networks should be included in the PECQ.
- The group discussed the confusion in the role of peer groups in line with the section 10 list of NDIS supports.

## Impact of multiple participants in a house

- The group asked how an assessment would consider when there was more than one participant in a household.
- How funding would be decided when a support could be funded through multiple government schemes was also raised.
- If more than one participant had the same need for a home modification, it may not need to be included in every plan.

## Wider use of PECQ data

- The group considered how the PECQ could be used across different Government agencies. This same data might be relevant for Aged Care, NDIS Quality and Safety Commission, and others.

# What we agreed to do

- Share the outcomes of discussions other working groups are having in relation to insights that will inform upcoming initiative topics.
- Share a document with the working group that reflects the risks they have raised and where those risks have been shared.

# 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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