13 November 2025

Quote from attendee: “NDIS staff need to change how they speak depending on who they’re talking to. When they try to make things very clear, it can sound too basic and feel patronising.”

What we talked about

Topic 1: Principles for communicating decisions

NDIA shared 9 draft principles to guide how decisions should be explained to participants. The principles will help show what good communication looks, feels and sounds like. The principles will go on NDIS Engage so we can hear wider feedback from the community. They will also be included in training for NDIS staff.

The 9 draft principles are:

1. Reasons and outcomes
2. Person-centred
3. Care
4. Clear and plain English
5. Authentic
6. Transparent
7. Integrity and accountability
8. Mutual understanding
9. Goal-based

What we heard

- Communication needs to be accessible and inclusive. There should be non-verbal options for people who are Deaf, hard of hearing, or cannot use the phone.
- NDIA staff should change their communication style depending on the person they are talking to. Simple language should be used when it is needed, but it shouldn’t be patronising.
- NDIA staff should show respect for each participant’s lived experience when communicating.
- Staff should use empathy, emotional awareness and curiosity. They should ask helpful questions and avoid making assumptions when explaining decisions.
- A principle about trauma-responsiveness should be included. Many participants may feel anxiety or fear due to past negative experiences with planning.
- Information needs to be consistent across NDIA, LACs and partners. This helps to build trust and reduce confusion.
  NDIA should clearly explain what information and evidence they used to make a decision, and

why they accepted or did not accept the recommendations.
- Participants want to know who made the decision and be able to ask that person any follow up questions.

Topic 2: Updates on co-design and consultation for the New Way of Planning

NDIA talked about what the other co-design working groups have been doing in 2025.

- The Assessments and Budgeting Working Group has focused on the tools to assess support needs, budgeting principles, spending flexibility and the overall Support Needs Assessment journey.
- The Navigator Working Group has focused on supported decision-making and sharing knowledge.
- The Participant Safeguarding Working Group has focused on the different ways participants experience safety, risk and safeguards.

NDIA also talked about the Design Hub, which tests and improves the tools and resources participants might use in the New Way of Planning. The Design Hub is not a co-design group.

What we heard

- Allied health reports should support the Support Needs Assessment (SNA) and NDIA should read them.
- Participants need easier-to-use budgeting tools that help them keep track of their spending.
- The role of the Navigator is still unclear and needs more explanation.
- Safeguarding should be part of the whole planning process, not treated as something separate.
- The Design Hub should include people with lived experience from diverse groups. This includes Deaf, hard of hearing, Deafblind, regional and remote communities, and First Nations peoples.

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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