

On this page:

[Key facts](#)

[Background](#)

[ECEI reset consultation papers](#)

[The ECEI reset - what is proposed to change:](#)

[The ECEI reset - what is not changing:](#)

[What do the changes mean for my child?](#)

[Have your say](#)

Key facts

- We had an open discussion about the way we support young children and their families.
- We've consulted and looked at evidence about the best practice approach for Early Childhood Early Intervention (ECEI).
- We released two papers; the [ECEI Implementation Reset Project consultation report](#) and [Supporting young children and their families early, to reach their full potential](#) .
- These two papers covered the ECEI Implementation Reset project with the background to the project for context, areas for improvement and further detail on how best practice is intended to work.
- We've developed 23 recommendations to improve our ECEI approach.
- We've received your feedback on these recommendations
- As a result of the [announcement from the Minister](#) for the NDIS on 9 July 2021, we will not be proceeding with independent assessments. This means some of the recommendations will require a different approach and are likely to take more time.

Background

Early childhood intervention (ECI) is the extra support given to young children who need it, early in their life, to help them build their skills so they can take part in everyday activities. It is for young children who might have, or are experiencing, developmental delay or disability.

ECI provides parents, carers and families with the knowledge, skills and specialist supports to meet the needs of their child, to assist with their child's development and to participate in family and community life.

We developed our current ECEI approach in 2016. It was the first national approach to early childhood intervention, supporting children with developmental delay and disability, and their families to achieve their best outcomes.

More than 70,000 young children and their families in Australia are currently benefiting from supports delivered through the ECEI approach.

Despite our best intentions, some children are not receiving best practice supports early enough, and families often tell us they are confused about how early childhood intervention can help them. In addition, many think an NDIS plan is the only or best option for their child.

ECEI reset consultation papers

We know families need the NDIA to have simple processes. We also know families want clear information about where they can go to get help, and what help is available. They don't want added stress at an uncertain time. Families want processes that reduce confusion and frustration, and to get the help their child needs at the right time.

We wanted to understand these concerns and work out how to fix them. To do this, we talked to families, the early childhood sector and our early childhood partners about how we could continue to improve the way we support young children and families.

We found that we needed to reset the implementation of our ECEI approach to make sure children and families can get best practice support early, so young children could benefit the most benefit from early intervention supports.

We released two papers that set out 23 recommendations to reset the implementation of our early childhood approach.

The first paper was developed for families and carers.

The second paper was a longer project consultation report on the ECEI Implementation Reset that outlined the research, recommendations and background. This paper was published for sector stakeholders, governments and mainstream supports like education and health, as well as families and carers that want more detail.

The consultation paper was open for comment for three months. Submissions closed in late February 2021.

We've released [post consultation reports](#) which include summaries of the submissions we received through the consultation process.

The ECEI reset - what is proposed to change:

- The age group best suited to receive early childhood services changes from under seven years of age, to under nine years.

- Enhancing Short Term Early Intervention (STEI), which is the early support that is offered whether or not a child is eligible for an NDIS plan.
- A distinct ECEI implementation model, differentiated from the general Scheme, which enables young children to receive the right level and mix of support for the right period of time, through a family centred approach aligned with best practice.
- Planning and implementation to be more clearly based on best practice supports.
- Further assistance to help young children and families to successfully transition from needing NDIS supports and start the next stage of their life.

The ECEI reset - what is not changing:

- A national approach to early childhood intervention, supporting children with developmental delay and disability, and their families to achieve their best outcomes.
- Independent assessments will not be used to determine eligibility and budgets for young children.
- Early childhood partners continue to tailor support to your child's individual needs and circumstances.
- Your early childhood partner will provide you with information.
 - Connect you and your child with the most appropriate supports in your area, such as the community health centre, educational setting and playgroup
 - Provide some short-term early intervention where it has been identified as the most appropriate support
 - Help you to request NDIS access if your child requires longer-term early childhood intervention supports. If your child becomes an NDIS participant the early childhood partner will work with you to develop an NDIS plan.

What do the changes mean for my child?

You will be able to continue to use your existing supports during this consultation period and until any changes have been finalised.

If you have any concerns specific to your child's support needs, or how these proposed changes might impact your family, please contact your early childhood partner to discuss your situation.

Have your say

You gave us your feedback on these recommendations. We've released [post consultation reports](#) which includes summaries of the submissions we received through the consultation process.

Releasing these papers and asking for your feedback was just the first step. Improving how we deliver our ECEI approach will take some time. Now the submission period is closed, we're starting to design and plan how we'll deliver our new ECEI approach.

We'll keep talking to you about these improvements to our ECEI approach. Before we change our policies or operational guidelines, we want to make sure any changes will make a difference to the lives of young children and their families. We need help from families, carers, early childhood practitioners, providers, and our early childhood partners to do this.

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