4 March 2025

The National Mental Health Sector Reference Group (NMHSRG) met on Wednesday, 4 March 2026. The meeting was held online.

Focus of the meeting

The focus of the March meeting was:

- NDIA update
- 2026 NDIA Psychosocial disability priorities
- 2026 Workplan
- New Framework Planning.

NDIA update

- New Framework Planning:
  - New National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) rules are being developed by the Department of Health, Disability and Ageing (DHDA). These rules will describe the new disability support needs assessment process.
  - The Support Needs Assessment helps decide the funding in a participant's NDIS plan.
  - This new way of planning will create more flexible budgets.
- Many details around the new way of planning and development of the Support Needs Assessment, are still being finalised. The NDIA will give updates as changes happen.
- The NDIA will hold public information sessions to help people learn more about these changes.
- The NDIA has started to test the new way of planning with participants and nominees. Participants can register to take part in this testing by joining the New Framework Planning Pool.
- The NDIA is also working to improve the current way of planning and the experience of participants.

2026 NDIA psychosocial disability priorities

The NDIA gave a presentation on its plans to improve support for people with psychosocial disability:

The 3 focus areas are:

Access

- Understand why access rates are going down.
- Use this information to improve how the NDIA works.

Psychosocial Recovery Coach

- Review the Psychosocial Recovery Coach role.
- Use what is learned from the review to make future NDIS changes.

New Framework Planning

- Make sure the NDIA thinks about the unique needs of people psychosocial disability when designing and delivering the new way of planning.

2026 Workplan

The NDIA asked members what is most important to their organisations. This information will help the NDIS to decide what to focus on in the NMHSRG 2026 Workplan.

Members agreed that the NDIA's plans for 2026 are important. They supported the focus areas and said the work will help improve outcomes for people with psychosocial disability.

New Framework Planning

The NDIA talked about the Support Needs Assessment.

The support needs assessment will include the following:

- A core needs assessment tool, which is a modified version of the Instrument for the Classification and Assessment of Support Needs (I-CAN) version 6. The tool was developed by the Centre for Disability Studies.
- A Personal and Environmental Circumstances Questionnaire (PECQ). The PECQ gives some circumstantial or environmental information not captured in the core tool.
- Extra targeted assessment modules may be used only if particular supports are needed such as assistive technology and home modifications.

Member feedback included:

- The NDIA needs to give clear information about the assessor skills and qualifications.
- Some psychosocial disability conditions can change over time. There are also times when a person may need more support than other times.

New framework plans will include:

- A flexible budget where participants can generally choose which NDIS supports to buy.
- Stated supports where funding must be used on a specific item or support.

The Group also talked about plan variations and reassessments.

The NDIS Act lets the NDIA make a plan variation for small changes without needing to create a new plan. This lets the NDIA add funding when needed to prevent a risk to a participant's life, health or safety.

In the new way of planning, when a participant needs a new plan, they will usually need a plan reassessment and a new support needs assessment.

Next meeting

The next National Mental Health Sector Reference Group meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, 10 June 2026 from 1:00pm to 4:00pm AEST.

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