11 December 2025

> “We've spent 24/7 living with our disabilities, so we have expertise to contribute and we are passionate about doing so.”

What we talked about

Topic 1: Overview of the Instrument for the Classification and Assessment of Support Needs (I-CAN) version 6 tool

The NDIA and the University of Melbourne gave an overview of the I-CAN version 6 tool that NDIA has procured.

The group discussed the tool as part of the Support Needs Assessment process.

Topic 2: Update on NDIS Rules engagement activities

The Department of Health, Disability and Ageing (DHDA) shared an update on their public engagements.

Topic 3: Group governance

The group was introduced to the incoming NDIA co-chair.

What we heard

Topic 1: Overview of I-CAN version 6 tool

The University of Melbourne and the NDIA spoke about the following issues.

- The support needs assessment focuses on what support a person needs to live a fulfilling life, rather than a functional or diagnostic assessment.
- NDIA has procured the I-CAN version 6 as the core tool of the support needs assessment. This tool will be supplemented with a personal environmental and circumstances questionnaire (PECQ) as well as a more targeted assessment only if required.
- The I-CAN is a holistic, strengths-based tool that is person-centred and semi-structured for all disability types aged 16 years plus.
- The tool was conceived in the late 1990s and has been in use for 20 years. It is based on extensive research and founded on the principles of the International Classification of

Functioning, Disability and Health (ICF) and the UN Convention on the Rights of People with Disability (UNCRPD).
- The tool uses a semi-structured interview format to understand person's holistic support needs. The interview covers 12 domains, for example, mobility, personal care, community life. Each domain has sub-domains.
- Information from the support needs assessment will inform budgets and plans.
- The tool is not a computer algorithm and not a "cookie-cutter" approach.
- The tool can only be used by trained, accredited assessors. The first group of 80 assessors will be allied health professionals or have a relevant qualification. They must pass an accreditation process, per the requirements from the Centre for Disability Studies.
- The NDIA and University of Melbourne will continue to work with diverse groups of participants over coming years to refine the I-CAN tool to meet NDIS needs.

Members raised several issues for discussion.

- Participants may not present their best self and not get the scores they really need. Participants may also need prompting to answer questions accurately.
- Can the rating scale reliably measure fluctuating and episodic needs, including psychosocial disability, or the needs of people with vision impairment or complex needs?
- What will be the result of neurotypical people assessing Autistic people? What are the qualifications and training of the NDIA assessors who will use the I-CAN tool?
- Tailored approaches are needed for diversity of disability and geographic location. How are 'personas' being identified and tested?
- The tool must be culturally safe for First Nations participants. Who in the NDIA is leading this work with First Nations communities and how?
- What testing methodology is being applied and how will independent validation occur?
- How are the three assessment elements brought together for scoring and who does this?
- How long will assessments take and what can participants expect in practice?
- How is the workforce being trained for reviews and appeals in the new way of planning?
- How will feedback from this group be captured, validated and used?

Topic 2: Update on NDIS Rules engagement

The DHDA spoke about the following issues.

- The DHDA and NDIA held joint public webinars in late 2025 to explain the new way of planning and the core assessment tool.
- Stakeholders on the webinar raised questions about:
    - clear explanations of the reviews and appeals process
    - how participants can review their support needs assessment for accuracy
    - testing of the assessment process by participants

    - ensuring the NDIA workforce (assessors) have the right qualifications.
- The DHDA will hold public consultations on the new NDIS Rules from January to March 2026. The NDIS Rules will guide the new way of planning.
- Public feedback, actuarial input and stakeholder consultations will inform an ‘impact assessment’ of the planning rules. The impact assessment will be published around April 2026 and tabled in Parliament before the NDIS Rules are finalised.
- Members were encouraged to engage in the consultation process.
- Members spoke about:
    - wanting further detail about the NDIS rules and impact assessment
    - bringing insights from other engagements to this group for validation
    - greater clarity from NDIA about what the group can influence.

Who we met with

Participants, Disability Representative and Carer Organisations, Independent Advisory Council and Reference Group members, University of Melbourne and NDIA staff.

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