29 May 2026

Friday 29 May 2026, 10:00am to 1:00pm (AEST)

Who we met with

Disability Representative and Carers Organisations (DRCO) attendees: Australian Autism Alliance, Australian Federation of Disability Organisations, Autistic Self Advocacy Network of Australia and New Zealand, Blind Citizens Australia, Carers Australia, Children and Young People with Disability Australia, Deaf Australia, Deafness Forum Australia, Disability Advocacy Network Australia, Down Syndrome Australia, Every Australian Counts, Inclusion Australia, JFA Purple Orange, Mental Health Australia, Mental Health Carers Australia, National Ethnic Disability Alliance, National Mental Health Consumer Alliance, People with Disability Australia, Physical Disability Australia, Rare Voices Australia, ReImagine Australia, Self Advocacy Resource Unit, Women with Disabilities Australia, Young People in Nursing Homes National Alliance.

Independent Advisory Council (IAC) attendees: Vaughn Bennison, Sharon Boyce, Assoc. Professor Lorna Hallahan, Dr Gill Hicks, Dr Leighton Jay, Samantha Jenkinson, Danielle Loizou, Sam Paior, Mark Tonga, Leah van Poppel, Jane Wardlaw, Rosemary Kayess and Andrew Vodic.

NDIA attendees: Clair Wheeler, Alex Rosenthal, Susan Moore, Donna Purcell, Kathy McEwan. Georgia Chapman, Phillip Wakefield, Elizabeth Fay, Kitty Howard, Renaud Goyette, Sarah Castles and Sandra Shillaker.

Apologies: First Peoples Disability Network, Community Mental Health Australia, and Tricia Malowney.

What we talked about

Topic 1: Support Needs Assessment (SNA) simulation

Participant experience

Vaughn Bennison, IAC member, shared his experience of completing a simulated SNA as a participant. Vaughn provided the following insights.

- The overall experience was positive.
- The assessment took approximately 3.5 hours.

- Vaughn didn’t receive his draft report until several weeks after the simulation, which limited his ability to accurately assess the effectiveness of the SNA.
- Vaughn said disability specific expertise amongst assessors would be valuable.
- Vaughn said the process prompted self-reflection, which was positive, but it was unclear how this insight could be reflected in the report.
- The simulation did not include a budget outcome, which limited Vaughn’s ability to understand how the assessment translates into planning decisions. Vaughn suggested a budget outcome should be part of the simulation.
- Vaughn suggested follow-up meetings after the simulations to improve lessons learnt.
- Vaughn encouraged the Agency to better prepare people for the SNA process, especially new participants to the NDIS.

SNA assessor experience

Renaud Goyette, an accredited NDIA support needs assessor, shared his experience of the SNA simulation, outlining current training, testing, and intended expansion of the SNA testing programme.

Renaud provided the following insights.

- The first accredited assessors have done 2-3 months of accreditation training with a strong focus on understanding the assessment tools.
- Current SNA testing is early-stage and exploratory, not end-to-end.
- The Agency is currently planning for larger-scale testing with accredited assessors in preparation for the 1 April 2027 go-live date.
- Targeted modules are not currently included in the SNA simulations.
- Renaud acknowledged accredited assessors may need to do more training to learn about how the SNA might be affected by potential future legislative changes.

What we heard

Members provided the following feedback.

- Concern the NDIA is presenting current testing as broader than it actually is.
- Concern the SNA might not be appropriate for people who struggle with self-reporting or self-advocacy. For example, people living with intellectual disability, brain injury, or psychosocial disability.
- The SNA process needs to:
    - recognise communication challenges, including for people living with Autism
    - ensure intersectional disabilities are properly considered

    - ensure consistent interpretation of language. For example, the meaning of independence is different for people with disability vs people without disability
    - recognise fluctuating conditions and allow people to provide responses over multiple sessions.
- Members are hearing that parents feel they need to attend the simulation to fill knowledge gaps because participants are struggling to articulate their needs with assessors.
- Concern the SNA is not appropriate for people living with rare conditions due to lack of assessor expertise.
- Concern informal support assumptions do not account for emergencies or crises. For example, if a primary carer is unavailable to support.
- The SNA process should include multiple assessors, or improved validation to reduce bias.
- Members wanted to see the testing timeline, methodology and reports from testing so far.
- Concern about assessor training and their understanding of, and response to functional limitations, including how assistive technology can result in secondary ongoing issues. For example, how using crutches for many years can impact a participant's hands and arms.
- Strong support for assessments to be face-to-face for a positive participant experience

Topic 2: Working together

The NDIA proposed changes to engagement ways of working including discontinuing the QRF in its current format, and moving to a more strategic, purpose-driven model.

What we heard

- Members provided the following feedback.
- Strong agreement the current model has a lot of information sharing and not enough strategic discussion.
- Members want to review and provide input to the Agency's consultation and engagement workplan.
- Members want to see the NDIA's reform roadmap.
- The Agency's proposal for expert panels instead of dedicated advisory groups raised risks, including unequal access to information and the potential exclusion of expert advice from across the disability community.
- Members preferred smaller, targeted, online working groups, with most time spent on discussion. These could take place monthly or as required.
- Members still saw value in holding a regular forum with DRCOs and IAC members for strategic and collaborative planning.

- Members welcomed this discussion, as it demonstrated the NDIA is listening to feedback on the role of the DRCO Forum and the overall co-design and engagement programme.

Topic 3: Equity and inclusion principles

The NDIA presented its draft equity and inclusion principles aimed at supporting an inclusive, safe, and responsive NDIS for all people with disability.

What we heard

- Members provided the following feedback.
- Members called for clear, measurable indicators of success. For example:
  - participant satisfaction (by cohort),
  - accessibility metrics, complaints and appeals data, and
  - outcome-based indicators.
- Accountability mechanisms and public reporting should be introduced. The Agency noted the equity and inclusion principles will not replace already existing public accountability mechanisms such as the Participant Service Guarantee and Service Charter, and associated quarterly reporting.
- Intersectionality should be addressed at a systemic level.
- NDIA should recognise that different age groups have vastly different needs, as do participants living in remote and regional areas.
- Additional characteristics to be reflected in the principles were recommended, including:
  - LGBTQIA+ communities
  - Faith and spirituality
  - Intergenerational disadvantage and poverty
  - People in institutional or unstable living situations.
- Members suggested some further targeted consultation with organisations that represent people with disability from LGBTQIA+ communities.
- Inclusion principles must not replace the gender equity strategy.
- The principles should recognise:
  - informal supports and inequitable access to these
  - supported decision-making and communication needs, and
  - combined and overlapping disadvantage.

Actions

Action	Details	Responsibility

1	Share final version of the NDIA Engagement Framework before it is published.	Engagement and Inclusion Branch
2	Share a roadmap of the reforms the NDIA needs to design and implement.	Co-design Branch
3	Host a walkthrough of the SNA process, including the SNA tool, PECQ and targeted assessments. This action was also taken at the DRCO forum. An out of session meeting will be arranged before the next DRCO meeting in August.	Engagement and Inclusion Branch
4	Provide written overview of key themes heard through the SNA simulation process to all QRF attendees.	Co-design Branch
5	Agency to work with DRCO working group/s and the IAC Principal Member out of session to develop a proposal for future ways of working.	Engagement and Inclusion Branch

Related articles

Quarterly Reform Forum meeting summary February 2026

Date
19 February 2026
Category

- News

Quarterly Reform Forum meeting summary Tuesday 19 August 2025

Date
19 August 2025
Category

- News

Reform for Outcomes quarterly meeting summary Friday 30 May 2025

Date
30 May 2025
Read more news