29 July 2026

The Supported Decision Making Advisory Group (SDMAG) met on Wednesday, 29 July 2026. The meeting was held online.

Focus of the meeting

The focus of the July meeting was:

- Support needs assessment testing update.
- Circles of Support and Microboards.
- Support Needs Assessor Academy.

Support needs assessment testing update

The NDIA Design Hub team gave an update on testing for the support needs assessment which will support the new way of planning.

The NDIA has worked with SDMAG members, Inclusion Australia and Down Syndrome Australia to help design how the support needs assessment will work for participants who use decision making supports.

The NDIA is testing:

- How supported decision making works for participants when they complete a support needs assessment.
- What happens when a participant and supporter have different views.
- How assessors can make sure they are hearing the participant’s own views.

The NDIA has created information to help participants take part in testing. This includes:

- A participant workbook in Easy Read.
- A supporter statement.
- An assessor guide.

Member feedback included:

- Testing should include people with complex communication needs. This includes people who do not use words to communicate.
- Assessments should clearly show the views of participants and their supporters.
- Assessments need to work well for people who do not have family members or other informal supporters.
- Testing should include older participants and ageing families.

- Participants who have had decisions made for them in the past should still be able to share their views during testing.

Circles of Support and Microboards

The NDIA talked about Circles of Support and Microboards. They asked members for feedback on how to improve policy.

A Circle of Support is a group of family members, friends and other trusted people who help a person with disability make decisions, build connections and plan for the future.

A Microboard is a not for profit legal organisation created around a person with disability. It helps make sure the person’s goals, preference and choices are at the centre of decision making.

The NDIA discussed:

- Research and evidence about Circles of Support and Microboards.
- How these arrangements can support decision making and inclusion.
- The role of facilitators in setting up and supporting these arrangements.
- How participants may be able to use flexible budgets under the new way of planning.

Member feedback included:

- Use Circles of Support and Microboards to help make sure the participant's voice is heard when important decisions need to be made.
- Families need to know about these options before they are needed in an emergency.
- Setting up a Circle of Support or Microboard early can help ageing parents and carers prepare for the future.
- People with no informal supporters may need support and funding to help set up a Circle of Support or Microboard.
- People living in group homes should be supported to understand their decision making rights.
- Provide real life examples of Circles of Support and Microboards to help participants and families understand how these arrangements work.

NDIA Support Needs Assessor Academy

The NDIA gave an update on the development of the Support Needs Assessor Academy (SNA Academy). The SNA

Academy will train and accredit NDIA support needs assessors. It will focus on building the skills and knowledge assessors need to complete assessments in a safe and respectful way.

Support needs assessors will complete supported decision making training and learn how to work with participants, supporters and nominees.

The SNA Academy will focus on:

- Working effectively with participants, supporters and nominees.
- Supporting participant choice, control and involvement in assessments.
- Understanding disability and communication needs.
- Knowing when and how to work with decision supporters and nominees.

Member feedback included:

- Assessors should understand the important role supporters can play in decision making.
- Assessors should understand the difference between supported decision making and substituted decision making.
- Assessors should be trained to listen carefully and not make assumptions about a person's abilities, support needs or choices.
- Assessors should have strong skills in working with people who have complex communication needs.
- Assessors should be trained to help participants feel safe, respected and supported during assessments.
- Assessors should understand cultural safety and how culture can influence decision making.
- Assessors should understand that decision making ability can change over time.
- Assessments should allow enough time for people with complex support needs to complete the assessment.
- Participants and supporters should have opportunities to review assessment information.

Next meeting

The next SDMAG meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, 28 October 2026.

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