12 October 2020

Martin Hoffman, NDIA CEO, has released an open letter to all participants, their families and carers. Read the letter in full below.

On November 24 2020, Minister for the NDIS, Stuart Robert, released an Information Paper with updated information.

---

Dear participants, families and carers,

In August, we shared the NDIS Participant Service Charter and Service Improvement Plan with you. These documents set out our commitments and explain how we will make the NDIS better over the next two years. We've done this because we've heard from you that the NDIS needs to be simpler, faster and fairer.

I wanted to write to you today to share some further information about the improvements we are making to the NDIS, and respond to concerns people have raised around independent assessments.

An Easy Read version of this letter is also available.

## Facts about introducing independent assessments

Independent assessments give a simpler, faster and fairer basis for making decisions about access to the NDIS and plans.

We will be introducing free independent assessments for people over seven years old who are applying for the Scheme for the first time from early next year, and then at some plan reviews for existing participants from the middle of 2021. Independent assessments for children less than seven will also start in 2021.

Independent assessments will not be needed every year or at every plan review. They'll be needed only when there is a major change in your life or plan.

Assessments will be free because you told us that costs involved in getting assessments and evidence to support your applications and reviews often put you out of pocket.

We are creating a panel of assessors, health professionals like occupational therapists, physiotherapists, speech pathologists, clinical and registered psychologists, rehabilitation counsellors and social workers who will work at arm's length from the NDIA.

These assessors will all be trained in using the same set of assessment tools to make sure everyone is treated in a fair and consistent way.

The tools have been designed to assess the capability of people with disability and used all over the world for many years. They also take into account your particular circumstances and environment.

You can do the assessment in one session or many. Where possible, you can choose which assessor you want from the panel and whether you prefer a male or female assessor. You can complete the assessment by video call or in person. You can have someone with you, like a family member, support worker, or your current health professional.

If you do not agree with an NDIA decision from an independent assessment you can request a review or appeal.

Your doctor or other health professionals you know will still be involved in your application to the NDIS, and if further evidence is needed at a plan review. You will be able to submit any extra information you think is important. Your planner or Local Area Coordinator will still talk with you about your life including the impact of multiple disabilities, your goals, family supports and living arrangements to make sure we get a complete picture of your goals and support needs.

You will still have choice over the providers and types of supports you need to pursue your goals.

## Sharing information about how independent assessments will work

We made the decision to announce the introduction of independent assessments early. We did this so that there would be time to work through the detail in close consultation with people with disability and representative organisations.

We have released further information about the assessment tools including information in Easy Read. Also on the NDIS website is more information about the independent assessment pilots. The second pilot ended in March 2020, due to the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic.

We'll be starting this second pilot again soon, to continue testing how we implement independent assessments. As part of this we'll be offering independent assessments for up to 4,000 existing NDIS participants with all disability types on a voluntary basis from October 2020. If you are invited to join this pilot, I encourage you to get involved and give us your feedback.

Over the coming months we will keep sharing more information about how the assessments will work. We will be working with participants, families and carers, providers and representative organisations to design the detail of the approach. This will ensure independent

assessments are flexible and adapted to meet the needs of people with particular disabilities, and of different groups of people.

The NDIA will shortly release an engagement and consultation schedule to support the implementation of independent assessments. Sessions will be conducted nationwide, aligned to coronavirus (COVID-19) restrictions.

Please keep asking us your questions. You can send your questions to feedback@ndis.gov.au. It is important that we give you all the information you need so you can be comfortable with the changes and feel prepared when they do happen. You are our priority.

Kind regards,

Martin Hoffman
CEO NDIA

Read the letter in Easy Read:

- Easy Read - Improving the National Disability Insurance Scheme (PDF 5MB)
- Easy Read (text only) - Improving the National Disability Insurance Scheme (DOCX 46KB)

## Related articles

### The National Disability Insurance Agency (the Agency) has released its 2022-26 Corporate Plan.

Date
15 August 2022

### Open letter to Victorian participants about COVID-19 supports

Date
3 September 2020

### Assessment tools to improve consistency of NDIS access and plans

Date

30 September 2020

Read more news