23 October 2020

NDIS Participants will have the opportunity to experience free independent assessments and provide feedback as part of a voluntary NDIA pilot resuming in late October.

The pilot, postponed in March due to the Covid-19 Pandemic, will enable the Agency to make sure Independent Assessments meet the needs of a diverse range of NDIS participants, when they start in 2021.

Assessments delivered under the pilot will not be used for decisions in regards to NDIS Participants current plans or funding. However, participants of the pilot will receive a copy of their assessment and they can choose to share it with their treating health care professional, or use at their next scheduled review.

The NDIA announced free Independent Assessments in August as part of the NDIS Service Improvement Plan. The Plan will deliver 51 changes to improve the NDIS experience for participants, their families and carers.

“This pilot will provide an important opportunity for participants to experience first-hand how assessments will be completed, how long they may take and what their final assessment will look like,” NDIA CEO Martin Hoffman said.

“Importantly, pilot participants will receive a free assessment and provide valuable feedback to ensure assessments are gathering the right information to make sure each NDIS plan is built consistently and fairly and delivering the funding and supports needed.

“We held our first independent assessment pilot in 2018-2019. There were some very positive results from this pilot, with participants reporting high levels of satisfaction with their appointment.

“Participants who are contacted to volunteer are encouraged to participate to ensure the NDIS population of 400,000 participants is well represented.”

The pilot will assist the NDIA to:

- Understand the experiences of different participant cohorts, like people with complex and psychosocial disabilities, and participants who are of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander or culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds
- Demonstrate how assessments will deliver NDIS plans that are equitable and consistent, and provide participants with the reasonable and necessary supports they need.
- Assess the training and support needs of the new assessor workforce and NDIA delegates who make access and planning decisions.
- To build evidence-based decisions that will enable participants to have flexibility within their plans to purchase the supports they need for everyday life.

The NDIA will approach NDIS participants directly to invite them to participate in the voluntary pilot, this will ensure participants involved are from a broad cross-section of the NDIS participant population, and represent a range of ages, disabilities, locations and circumstances.

Independent Assessments were first recommended by the Productivity Commission in 2011, and more recently in the 2019 Tune Review.

Independent assessments focus on a person's individual capability, creating a complete picture of their day-to-day life, including how they manage tasks and activities in their everyday environment, using a number of internationally recognised tools administered by suitably qualified health professionals.
"Independent Assessments were announced well in advance of implementation to ensure we can work with the community to refine the new approach before it is implemented next year," Mr Hoffman said.

Consultation will continue with the disability sector and participants and their families in advance of the roll out independent assessments in 2021.

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