12 April 2021

The NDIA wishes to clarify information regarding Independent Assessments, and the ongoing Pilot program.

In light of recent reports in the media it is important that our participants, families and carers, and the wider disability sector have the correct information.

# Independent assessments

Independent assessments are part of a program of significant improvements to the NDIS that make it simpler, faster, fairer and more flexible for participants, and their families and carers.

Future and current participants will no longer need to organise an assessment or collect evidence to show the impact of their disability, saving them time and money.

Independent Assessments use internationally-recognised tools and qualified health professionals, and will be available no matter where a person lives or their individual circumstances.

The Independent Assessment process provides consistent and reliable evidence that describes a person’s functional capacity, and the environment in which they live.

Questions in the assessment tools have been used by health professionals prior to the pilot, and are aligned to the World Health Organisation’s International

Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health (ICF).

This information helps determine a person’s eligibility for the NDIS, and enables the creation of a more flexible NDIS plan and budget.

The purpose of this second pilot is to test how Independent Assessments work, and to gather additional feedback from participants, their families and carers, and assessors. We will use this feedback to improve the independent assessment process for the Scheme's diverse participants.

# Independent assessment pilot program

It is important to note that participation in the pilot has always been, and remains, voluntary.

We want the pilot to represent the full diversity of Scheme participants. This means we contacted a wide variety of participants to ensure sufficient representation by gender, disability type, age, socioeconomic region, remoteness, and state. The Agency has directly contacted participants to invite them to volunteer to complete a free, independent assessment.

These invitations have been sent in various forms – including the sending of letters, emails, phone calls and SMS messages.

This contact and the method by which invitations and follow-ups have been sent is based on each participant's recorded communication preference. This is consistent with our usual channels when making contact with participants and their support networks.

If a participant does not wish to take part, they can advise the Agency in any manner that they choose. If they do, we will not contact them again regarding the pilot.

Once a participant chooses to opt-in to the pilot, they will be contacted at various intervals throughout the process.

Any participant has the option to decline to participate at any stage. There is no obligation to complete the process.

While independent assessments are expected to take around three hours, they have no time limit, and participants can choose to do the assessment in the way that best suits them – for example on the same day, or over a number of days.

The assessments are conducted by a range of registered health professionals that are qualified to administer the assessment tools. Registered health professionals include occupational therapists, physiotherapists, speech pathologists, clinical and registered psychologists.

While participants involved in the pilot will receive a copy of their independent assessment, we won't be using them to inform planning decisions. A participant can choose to provide it to the Agency in their next plan review meeting.

Any information gathered during the pilot is strictly confidential, and is stored securely in line with the NDIS Privacy Policy.

Participants who complete an independent assessment during the pilot program are encouraged to provide us with detailed feedback of their experience.

The NDIA has a Participant Engagement Payment Policy, which has had consultation and input from the Participant Reference Group and Independent Advisory Council. In line with this policy, we continue to remunerate participants, people with disability and families and carers who give their time and provide feedback on our improvement projects, including those who have opted to participate in this pilot.

We are committed to getting independent assessments right. Feedback received from the pilot is one of the ways we are working with participants and their families to better understand how independent assessments will work in practice.

The Agency will review all feedback before sharing the results of the second independent assessment pilot later this year.

## Related articles

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