



NDIS Rules: Public consultation on new framework planning

What we heard | July 2026

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Acknowledgment of Country

We, the Department of Health, Disability and Ageing (the department), proudly acknowledge the Traditional Owners and Custodians of Country throughout Australia, and pay respect to those who have preserved and continue to care for the lands and waters on which we live and, work, and from which we benefit each day. We recognise the strengths and knowledge Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples provide to the health, disability and aged care systems and thank them for their ongoing contributions to those systems and the wider community.

Summary

Background

We heard from the Independent Review into the NDIS (the Review) that the current planning process is inconsistent and inequitable and we need to improve. Recommendation 3 of the Review suggested the government provide a fairer and more consistent participant pathway that should include:

- clearer and more consistent processes for how needs assessments and planning is done
- more transparent decision-making, including how funding is worked out to support a participant's needs
- more flexibility so participants can use their funding for different supports.

In 2024, the Australian Parliament made changes to the *National Disability Insurance Scheme Act 2013* (NDIS Act). These changes allow a new way of planning under the NDIS, called new framework planning. New framework planning will make the NDIS fairer, more person-centred, transparent and sustainable.

To support these changes and develop new rules, the department is working with:

- the National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA)
- state and territory governments
- people with disability and the wider disability community.

What the new rules will be about

The new rules will explain how:

- a participant's disability support needs are assessed
- reasonable and necessary budgets are developed
- a participant can use their plan

About the consultation

The public consultation explained how some of the rules for new framework planning will work. We asked for feedback to support development of the rules.

The consultation opened on 23 January 2026 and closed on 6 March 2026. Feedback was provided through a survey, written and audio submissions and email. A total of 1,518 individuals and organisations responded, including 460 submissions. Submissions received outside this process will be used to shape new framework planning but are not reflected in this consultation report.

The consultation process

We heard clearly some aspects of the consultation process did not meet expectations. Respondents expressed a strong desire for more information about the support needs assessment and budget method rules, and more accessible formats. We acknowledge these concerns and are committed to improving future engagement.

We will keep engaging with the disability community, sector and other stakeholders prior to new framework planning rolling out, which will now start in April 2027.

About this report

This report summarises the key themes and findings from the consultation. It also explains how we will consider the feedback when developing the rules, before new framework planning rolls out from April 2027.

Key themes

The key themes raised through this consultation include:

- clearer communications and meaningful engagement on the detail of new framework planning reforms
- an appropriate, safe and accessible support needs assessment process
- the role of informal supports in new framework planning
- the connection between the assessment and budget outcomes
- the use of algorithms and automated decision-making.

Responses sought further information about:

- how a Notice of Impairment is determined and how it can be amended if it is inaccurate
- how and when participants will transition to a new framework plan
- how the support needs assessment is conducted
- how the assessment tools work with the budget model to determine budget outcomes
- how the budget model works
- when, how and who will conduct replacement support needs assessments
- what the appeal or review pathways are and how they are changing for new framework planning, along with examples.

Feedback outside of the new rules

Respondents provided feedback on operational and administrative processes. The key themes raised are highlighted throughout the report and collated under 'Operational and administrative matters'. These insights have been shared with the NDIA to help shape their operational and administrative processes and communication products.

Who we heard from

The consultation heard from people and organisations with lived experience of disability, from all states and territories, in cities, regional, rural and remote locations. Respondents included:

- people with a disability, their family or carers
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples
- culturally and linguistically diverse people
- LGBTIQ+ communities
- organisations delivering supports, working with or representing these cohorts.

Individuals

We received 1,201 individual contributions, primarily through survey responses.

Of the individual respondents:

- over half (55%) identified as people with disability
- nearly half (47%) were NDIS participants
- almost a third (31%) identified as carers, family members, kin or friends of people with disability
- most were aged 35 to 64 years, with responses from a wide age range.

Organisations, groups and service providers

We received 317 organisational contributions across survey responses and written submissions.

Of the organisations:

- most were disability service providers
- 92% were from the disability sector, often alongside health, ageing, education and social services
- 73% delivered services in regional, rural and remote areas.

What we heard

This section describes the overarching themes and findings.

Communication, engagement and consultation process

A significant number of respondents highlighted their expectations for receiving information about the development of new framework planning and meaningful engagement.

Respondents welcomed the intent to improve NDIS planning but sought clearer explanations for how the new approach will lead to a better experience and fair outcomes. Some respondents also sought clearer information about new framework planning from end-to-end, including an outline of sequencing and timeframes.

Some also sought reassurance that their current NDIS plan would remain unchanged until their new plan is implemented, and that the transition will be smooth, safe and well-supported.

Many respondents requested information about new framework planning reforms be in plain language, with key terms and explanations clarified and a greater focus on the practical impacts of proposed changes.

Some responses flagged the need to ensure all consultation materials are published in accessible formats. Feedback included suggestions to improve future communications, including the use of glossaries and plain language explanations.

Disability Representative Organisations and other stakeholders noted some information about new framework planning process was not included in the consultation materials. We have heard calls for the remaining information about the detail of the support needs assessment and budget method to be published to allow for more meaningful and informed engagement and consultation.

To support this, the Australian Government has announced the delay of new framework planning until 1 April 2027. This will allow more time to listen to feedback, test proposed rules and processes, and share more detailed information.

A further public consultation will be undertaken during August and September 2026 to share more information about the support needs assessment, how budgets are developed, and NDIS supports and variations.

Feedback on the proposed NDIS rules

Respondents provided feedback on Explanatory Documents describing the draft rules for the Notice of Impairments, transition to the new framework plan, new framework plan spending and stated supports.

Explanatory Documents describing the draft rules for the support needs assessment and the budget method were not included in this consultation. Without this, respondents were only able to provide feedback on how these rules are intended to operate, rather than how they will work in practice.

Notice of Impairments

Respondents sought further detail about the Notice of Impairment, including:

- when and how it will be issued to a participant
- how it will be determined, how impairments will be identified and what evidence will support these decisions
- how impairment categories will be explained in a culturally appropriate way
- how it can be corrected when it is inaccurate
- whether the support needs assessment can proceed when a Notice of Impairment is under review.

Some people also suggested replacing the term ‘impairment’ with a strengths-based term, while noting it is used in the NDIS legislation.

Notice to have a new framework plan

Respondents sought further detail about the Notice to Have a New Framework Plan, including:

- when and how it will be issued, including the circumstances that initiate a new framework plan and the format of the notification
- the transition pathway, including how much advance notice participants will receive to prepare for the planning conversation
- what information and advice will be provided to participants and their families to help them prepare
- how the planning conversation will work practically, such as who may attend, where the conversation will be held and options to have multiple sessions.

Support needs assessments

Respondents want clear information about who and what informs the assessment.

NDIA assessor

Respondents said support needs assessments should be conducted by NDIA assessors with allied health or equivalent disability expertise, preferably matched to a participant’s disability. Respondents were concerned assessors without an allied health background may miss critical clinical or functional details, particularly relating to complex conditions, fluctuating needs, developmental changes or comorbidities. Others suggested assessor capability and standards should be published or codified in the NDIS rules.

Respondents wanted reassurance that lived experience, community knowledge and clinical evidence would be respected by the support needs assessment, so that participants – including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples – are not disadvantaged.

Several responses asked how the principles of independence and impartiality would be upheld by NDIA assessors throughout this process. Respondents also sought to confirm whether a participant could choose their assessor.

Targeted assessments

Respondents wanted to know if evidence from health professionals would be incorporated into the support needs assessment, emphasising input from health professionals who have worked with participants over a long period should be part of the process.

Submissions consistently called for culturally led approaches as a core design feature so that new framework planning works for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples with disability. This includes dedicated planning and assessment pathways, co-designed and culturally validated tools, and assessors with demonstrated cultural and disability expertise.

Respondents called for a tailored approach for participants with lifelong disability to avoid repeated reassessments, particularly for participants who do not require frequent variations to their supports.

Support needs assessment tool

Respondents asked for clearer information about the assessment tools that will be used during the new framework planning process. They also wanted to know why these tools are suitable for assessing support needs, regardless of whether they were specifically built for new framework planning.

Some responses emphasised the need for assessment tools to account for the challenges and circumstances experienced in very remote contexts.

Respondents emphasised the assessment must be flexible, person-centred, clinically informed and responsive to real world needs. Respondents highlighted that assessments could lead to distress and fatigue, particularly when they do not accurately capture the:

- complexity of day-to-day functioning
- fluctuating or complex disability needs
- realities of carer and environmental contexts.

Many respondents focused on the Instrument for the Classification and Assessment of Support Needs (I-CAN) version 6. This was despite the consultation advising the University of Melbourne has partnered with the Centre for Disability Studies to provide a support needs assessment tool to the NDIA, and that the tool will be based on the I-CAN v6. Respondents sought assurance that the new tool would be validated for diverse cohorts of people with disability and can respond to fluctuating, sensory, psychosocial or degenerative support needs, as well as disability-related health needs.

Support needs assessment report

Respondents suggested additional information that should be included or considered in the support needs assessment report.

Responses said the report must show how the assessment leads to decisions about budget outcomes. Participants should be able to see the evidence relied upon, how contextual factors were weighted, and any adjustments were made. Respondents called for participants to be able to review the report before the support needs assessment is finalised and the budget is set.

Survey respondents said it was important that the support needs assessment report included other information and evidence used to create the report, as well as a description of support needs for each sub-domain in the core needs assessment. Some survey respondents also said it was important to include the raw assessment scores.

Replacement needs assessment

Respondents sought clarity around the circumstances in which a replacement support needs assessment should be considered. Many highlighted concerns about the current planning processes, noting it can be inconsistent and not reflect a person's support needs, particularly for people with fluctuating, episodic or progressive disabilities.

Respondents suggested that clearly outlining the process for requesting a replacement assessment would increase confidence in the assessment process.

Budget method rules

Many respondents sought further information about the budget method rules, including:

- how the outcomes of the support needs assessment convert into funding amounts
- the calculations to determine total funding amounts
- the use of algorithmic or automated processes.

Respondents said there must be a clear connection between assessment and budget outcomes. Respondents suggested publishing the methodology informing the budget rules, including how weightings and scores translate into reasonable and necessary budgets.

Several respondents highlighted the need for informal supports to be acknowledged as additional safeguards or supports, but not a replacement for NDIS supports.

Some Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander respondents were concerned informal supports may be over-relied on, with cultural obligations interpreted as unlimited caregiving capacity.

Respondents sought clarity on how informal supports are factored into new framework planning and raised it is important to:

- assess the situation and capability of informal carers and supporters
- treat informal supports as voluntary and finite
- not assume informal supports are the same as formal supports
- ensure informal supports do not determine the amount of funding a participant receives.

Some respondents told us the budget method should recognise very remote contexts.

NDIS supports and delivery of services

Respondents called for rules to be clear where NDIS supports are flexible or stated, and wanted updated lists of what is and is not a NDIS support under new framework planning.

Submissions highlighted thin markets in regional, rural and remote communities may restrict a participant's choice of services, including for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. Where services are limited, plans may appear adequate on paper but be unusable in practice. While new framework planning aims to address this through greater flexibility, respondents said that lower utilisation rates should not lead to assumptions that support needs have lessened or reduced funding.

Respondents raised concerns about providers who deliver NDIS supports, including issues related to fraud and pricing. Respondents called for strengthened integrity measures which target providers and do not penalise participants.

Through this consultation, we heard that flexibility enables participants to have choice and control when using their NDIS funding.

Additional feedback or comments

Safe, accessible and appropriate assessments

Most responses express the importance of having the right supports in place to ensure assessments are conducted in a safe and accessible way.

Some respondents suggested they would prefer to have an assessor that they know, despite this approach not being typical in other publicly funded systems.

Submissions from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander respondents broadly supported the intent of new framework planning but raised concerns about cultural safety. Respondents emphasised that NDIS planning cannot be separated from culture, kinship, country and community, and that mainstream, individualised planning approaches do not align with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander worldviews or holistic understandings of care. Standardised, point-in-time assessment tools risk misunderstanding or overlooking functional impact, fluctuating needs, cultural communication styles and community contexts.

Respondents also raised concerns that some people may be unable to communicate how their disability affects their life. This may result in these participants missing important details.

Many people were concerned the new assessment process will not capture the breadth of their support needs and individual circumstances. Some people were worried being assessed on a 'good day' may affect their assessment and budget outcomes. Others said it was important to consider some people may mask the impact of their disability.

Respondents suggested there should be flexibility in how assessments are conducted to allow participants to fully and effectively participate. Suggestions included options for assessments to be conducted over multiple sessions, breaks to be accommodated, and for diary or video entries to be considered.

Respondents sought clarification they can access appropriate supports, including:

- a support person
- supported decision making
- culturally safe assessments
- resources and assessments in accessible formats, including Easy Read, Auslan and language translations
- professional interpreters.

Support for carers and supporters of people with disability

In submissions, stakeholders said carers and supporters should be involved in assisting participants going through the new framework planning process.

This includes ensuring carers and supporters are:

- involved in different stages
- not expected to substitute for professional interpreters
- provided with the information they need to assist the participant.

Use of automation and algorithms

New framework planning aims to improve consistency of decision-making processes. Many respondents questioned, however, whether automated decision-making or algorithms will be used in new framework planning to achieve this. Some people were concerned about a reduction or replacement of human decision-making, or decisions being made that are not based on individual circumstances.

Some responses highlighted how inconsistent or inaccurate funding decisions under the current planning framework have negative impacts on NDIS participants, their families and supporters.

Feedback included the need to be upfront and clear about:

- automated processes or algorithms used in new framework planning
- how data is used by the assessment tools

Variations, reviews and appeals

In submissions, respondents emphasised that the appeals process must be simple, timely and accessible. Many stressed that the right to challenge administrative decisions must be retained. Many also expressed strong interests in the mechanism to reconcile disparities between external clinical advice or evidence and the output of the support needs assessment.

Respondents emphasised that an independent, arms-length review pathway would create fairness and accountability and build trust in the NDIS. Participants said plain English, accessible explanations for decisions taken would enable them to understand how outcomes were reached and on what basis.

New framework planning aims to provide greater flexibility, including to ensure changing support needs can be taken into account. Respondents agreed that simple, effective pathways were needed to adjust plans as support needs or circumstances change. They noted that a more streamlined approach would make supports safer, more responsive and sustainable, particularly during periods of functional decline, episodic conditions, carer fatigue, changes in living arrangements or urgent equipment needs. There was strong support for 'light touch' variations and interim funding options that avoid full reassessment for minor or temporary changes, alongside the ability to review draft plans before approval to prevent avoidable variation requests.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander respondents saw review rights, continuity of supports, recognition of thin markets, and investment in culturally safe navigation and evidence-gathering supports as essential.

Respondents highlighted that funding periods work best when they are flexible, evidence-based and tailored to participants' support use. They encouraged the NDIA to establish clear

flags for early review, provide transparent documentation of risks when supports are delayed, and ensure that appeal pathways remain accessible.

Clear guidance for using NDIS plans and budgets

Participants wanted clear, accessible and plain language explanations for how they can use their plan, including:

- how their plan was created
- how spending rules apply
- the differences between support categories
- how to get ongoing support to use their plan
- what the appeal or review pathways are.

Respondents called for support to ensure participants can use their plans effectively. Respondents were concerned unclear guidance could lead to participants accidentally misusing funds and being penalised or underspending their funds due to uncertainty.

Operational and administrative feedback

As outlined throughout the report, respondents provided feedback on operational and administrative processes.

Respondents raised matters, including:

- the need for clear, accessible information on new framework planning, including what will happen before, during and after the support needs assessment
- support needs assessments being conducted in a safe, trauma informed environment with supporters present, access to supported decision-making tools and the ability to break up the sessions to enable the best outcome
- ability to choose an assessor who has expertise in assessment for the participant's disability type.
- clear and accessible communication from the NDIA on how new framework planning will work and how it will be applied in practice, including timeframes in which a new plan is developed, and approach to replacement assessments, plan variations and plan reviews.
- greater clarity on the co-design process and who is being engaged to support the development of the new framework planning process.

How we will consider your feedback

We appreciate the thoughtful and constructive feedback provided through this consultation. Every contribution is being carefully considered as we refine new framework planning.

A significant portion of the feedback we received relates to operational and administrative matters. This information has been shared directly with the NDIA to inform planning practice, workforce capability, communication, accessibility and participant experience.

Feedback related to the design of the new framework planning model will shape the development of rules, explanatory materials and the impact assessment.

We also heard the strong message about the need for clearer, more accessible information. In response, we will review all factsheets, guidance and resources, including providing them in a broader range of formats, such as Easy Read, translated versions, screen-reader accessible documents and explainer videos. We want the resources we produce to be useful to as many people as possible.

Together, this feedback will play an essential role in shaping new framework planning rules that are fair, consistent and sustainable for the future.

Appendix 1. Glossary

Term	Definition
Budget method	The way the NDIA works out how much funding a participant gets in their budget. This is based on the support needs identified through the support needs assessment.
Flexible funding	Funding that participants can use to buy different NDIS-approved supports. These supports are not listed as specific items in a participant's plan.
Funding components	Groups of related supports in a participant's plan. Each component has a set amount of funding that can be used to buy supports in that group.
Funding periods	The length of time funding is available to use. Participants can spend up to the amount available during that time. Funding periods can apply to the whole plan or to individual funding components. Unspent funds from one period can roll over to the next period, up until the end of the plan.
Legislation	Laws made by Parliament.
NDIA Assessor	A person who carries out a support needs assessment or replacement assessment for the NDIA, for the purposes of section 32L of the Act.
New framework planning	The new planning process that will be introduced to replace old framework plans over time.
New framework plans	New framework plans do not exist yet and will be gradually introduced once new rules are in place. New framework plans are developed using a new support needs assessment and budget method. Reasonable and necessary budgets for new framework plans will be structured into flexible funding and stated support funding.
NDIS Act	The legal framework that created the NDIS and sets out how disability supports are provided in Australia.
NDIS rules	Legislative instruments made under the NDIS Act. They set out how the NDIS Act works in practice.

Notice	A document that shares information with a participant about their NDIS participant status. For example, a Notice of Impairment or a Notice to have a New Framework Plan.
Old framework planning	The current planning process that all participants go through now.
Old framework plans	Old framework plans are what all participants receive today. Old framework plans have reasonable and necessary supports developed using the current planning approach. Budgets for old framework plans are structured into core, capacity building and capital funding components.
Operational guidelines	Information based on the NDIS legislation and rules that explain what the NDIA needs to consider and how it makes decisions. (Glossary NDIS)
Support needs assessment	An assessment process that will be used by the NDIA to understand a participant's support needs in the future and create their budget.
Stated supports	A type of support where funding can only be spent on the specific supports identified.
Targeted Assessment Modules	Additional questions that may be asked by the NDIA Assessor to understand a participant's individual support needs: • Assistive technology assessment module • Home modifications assessment module • Vehicle modifications assessment module • Disability-related health supports assessment module
Total funding amounts	In new framework plans, it is the total amount of funds allocated to a reasonable and necessary budget over the length of a participant's plan.

Appendix 2. List of individuals and organisations who made a submission

The following individuals and organisations provided permission for us to publish their submissions. Noting, some people preferred to stay anonymous, and some did not provide enough details for us to publish their name.

Individuals

Aleida Verhoeven
Amelia Watson
Anna Lichy
Belinda Adams OAM
Brian Cooper
Caila Ihle
Cat Walker
Craig Maynard
Dr Devina Singh
Dr Samuel Arnold
Dr Stevie Lang Howson
Ella Edwards
Ellen Gould
James Cooney
Jarrod Sandell-Hay
Jodie Herbert

Julianne Brown
Katarzyna (Kate) Papierniak
Kate Chaney MP
Kate Hoad
Kim Bond and Genna Ward
Lisa Smith
Lucia Neely
Marielle Turner
Meredith Wilkinson
Peter Gregory
Prof Jennifer Smith-Merry
Ricky McKnight
Ross Hurford
Shirley Humphris
Storm Meiying Liu
Susan Helen Shaw-Maddrell

Organisations

Able and Rose
Active Ability
Advocating for Children with Disability
Aged and Disability Advocacy Australia
Alliance 20
Allied Health Professions Australia
Amaze
Amity Support Services
APM
Aruma
Aspect
Assistive Technology Suppliers Australia
Association for Behaviour Analysis
Australia
Australasian Association and Register of
Practicing Nutritionists
Australian Association of Psychologists Inc
Australian Association of Social Workers
Australian Autism Alliance
Australian Federation of Disability
Organisations
Australian Mitochondrial Disease
Foundation
Australian Neurodivergent Parents
Association

Australian Orthotic Prosthetic Association
Australian Podiatry Association
Australian Psychological Society
Australian Rehabilitation and Assistive
Technology Association
Australian X & Y Spectrum Support
Autism Aspergers Advocacy Australia
Autism Queensland
Avivo
Carers Australia
Carers WA
College of Emergency Nursing Australasia
Compass House Pty Ltd
Consumers of Mental Health WA
CoVerse
Deaf Australia
Dementia Australia
Dieticians Australia
Disability Advocacy Network Australia
Disability Rights and Culture
Disability Solutions and Outcomes
Down Syndrome Association NSW
Down Syndrome Australia
Each
Emerge Australia

Enabled Youth Disability Network
 Endeavour Foundation
 Every Australian Counts
 Exercise and Sports Science Australia
 Eyecare Support Worker Services Pty Ltd
 Grattan Institute
 Help Enterprises
 Inclusion Tree
 Independent Advisory Council to the NDIS
 Intensive Care at Home Pty Ltd
 Intrepidus Law
 JFA Purple Orange
 Justice and Equity Centre
 Kin Disability Advocacy
 Lifestart Disability Services
 Mallee Family Care
 Mental Health Australia
 Mental Health Carers Australia
 Motor Neurone Disease Association of
 Victoria
 Motor Neurone Disease Australia
 Multicultural Disability Advocacy Australia
 Multiple Sclerosis Australia
 National Aboriginal Community Controlled
 Health Organisation
 National Disability Services
 National Ethnic Disability Alliance
 National Legal Aid
 Occupational Therapy Australia
 Occupational Therapy Society for Invisible
 Disabilities
 Osteopathy Australia
 Outcomes Therapy
 Palliative Care Australia
 Parents of Deaf Children
 Parkinson's Australia

Pedorthic Association of Australia
 People with Disability Australia
 Physical Disability Council of NSW
 Professionals Australia
 Queensland Advocacy for Inclusion
 Queensland Independent Disability
 Advocacy Network
 Queenslanders with Disability Network Ltd
 Ramsay Health Plus
 Rare Voices Australia
 Recovery in Mind Occupational Therapy
 Rehabilitation Medicine Society of
 Australia and New Zealand
 Royal Children's Hospital
 SANAME Pty Ltd
 Scope Australia
 See Differently with the Royal Society for
 the Blind
 Self Advocacy Resource Unit
 Settlement Services International Limited
 Sisu Therapies
 Solid Foundations Allied Health
 South West Autism Network
 Speaking Up For You
 Speech Pathology Australia
 Spinal Cord Injuries Australia
 Summer Foundation
 TIYD Enterprises Pty Ltd
 Uniting Church in Australia, Synod of
 Victoria and Tasmania
 Uniting Communities
 Villamanta Disability Rights Legal Service
 Vision 2020 Australia
 Vision Australia
 Young People In Nursing Homes National
 Alliance

Appendix 3. Report methodology

Personal information was handled in accordance with the *Privacy Act 1988* and the privacy notice provided to participants, which explained how their de-identified feedback may be used to inform this consultation. Microsoft tools were used in the development of this report; all outputs were reviewed and validated by departmental staff to ensure accuracy and alignment with all contributions.

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All information in this publication is correct as at August 2026