

NDIS under pressure National disability insurance scheme

'Nightmare scenario for disabled people': NDIS overhaul risks lives, advocates say

Sweeping changes to the way National Disability Insurance Scheme support plans are generated criticised amid fears they amount to 'robo-planning'

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Advocates are concerned that funding and support plans for NDIS participants generated by a computer program amount to 'robo-planning' and could risk lives. Photograph: South_agency/Getty Images

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Advocates have criticised sweeping changes to the way National Disability Insurance Scheme support plans will be generated as “robo-planning” that risks the lives of NDIS participants, and have called on the government to rethink the changes.

Guardian Australia revealed this week that under a major overhaul of the NDIS to be rolled out next year, [funding and support plans for participants will be generated by a computer program](#) and staff will have no discretion to amend them, dramatically reducing human involvement in the process.

Details of the changes to the way NDIS plans are generated, which have not yet been made public, were outlined to National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA) staff in a recent internal briefing, seen by Guardian Australia.

“I’m genuinely alarmed by what the government is planning,” said Senator Jordon Steele-John, Australian Greens spokesperson for disability inclusion and the NDIS.

“They want to bring in an untested assessment process, feed the results into a computer algorithm no one can see and let that decide how much support a disabled person gets. And if the outcome is wrong, people won’t be able to challenge it through appeals any more.”

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Steele-John criticised the government for making the sweeping changes to the scheme, which supports more than 750,000 Australians, “behind closed doors, with no trial and no transparency”.

“We’ve seen what happens when governments rush out untested systems: it goes badly, and people get hurt,” he said. “I’m calling this out now because this risks being the end of the NDIS actually responding to people as individuals.”

An NDIA spokesperson said the changes to the planning system were made after an independent NDIS review “heard from thousands of participants and their supporters that they wanted a simpler, fairer process for NDIS participants to get the supports they need”.

Among the changes which are due to be rolled out from mid-2026 under the NDIS’s New Framework Planning model, which were outlined for staff in the briefing, were the significant changes to participants’ rights to appeal decisions about their funding.

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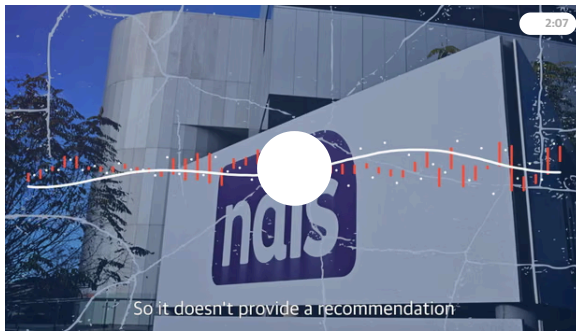


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According to the staff briefing, under the new model the administrative review tribunal (ART) will no longer have the authority to alter a person's plan or reinstate funding, a power it currently has.

Instead, an NDIA manager said the ART would only be able to send the plan back to the NDIA for the agency to conduct another assessment.

"The leaked information reported by the Guardian shows a move toward automated planning and far weaker appeal rights, and that is a serious threat to our human rights and to the NDIS that we were promised," said Dr George Taleporos, independent chair of Every Australian Counts, the grassroots campaign that fought for the introduction of the NDIS.

"Independent review of government decisions is critical. If the NDIA is the only body allowed to reassess a plan, even when a tribunal finds something wrong, then the system stops being fair and accountability is lost."

A spokesperson for the NDIA said: "Under the new planning process, a participant will continue to have the right to request a review of their plan, including a review through the administrative review tribunal. The ART will be able to order a replacement support needs assessment. At any time, as is the case now, a participant will also be able to request a reassessment or variation of their plan prior to its end date if their circumstances change."

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Dr Stevie Lang Howson, from advocacy group Disabled People Against Cuts, called the details of the New Framework Planning model revealed by the Guardian as "a nightmare scenario for disabled people".

"The government needs to go back to the drawing board. They can't be serious about allowing assessors who don't have to have allied health qualifications and a computer system to decide our quality of life. This is a terrifying plan that will hurt disabled people.

"Robo-planning risks our lives," he said.

A spokesperson for the NDIA said: "The new planning process is not automated, and the assessment will be conducted through a semi-structured interview process. This is a conversation between a participant and an assessor that can be completed in-person or virtually."

Sian Thomas, legal director of Queensland Advocacy for Inclusion, a community legal centre that represents NDIS participants, said that since the government introduced legislative changes last year, lawyers have been fearing the changes would amount to "robo-planning", but these fears have become "very real" after reading the detail of the planned changes revealed by Guardian Australia.

Thomas said she dealt with NDIS participants every day who had to go to tribunal to get the basic supports they needed because of the automation present in the NDIS's current system, and that under the new model, this automation would be taken even further.

"It's giving nobody, no person, a real ability to adjust a plan to meet a person's needs. It's really fixing people into boxes."

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