

I am a carer with 26 years of front-line experience supporting a person with complex, high-needs disabilities. I am writing to urgently highlight systemic failures in the NDIS that are causing great harm, particularly to participants with severe and profound disabilities.

After years of working inside the system, advocating, observing and reflecting, I do not believe we can fix the problems of the NDIS with minor adjustments. ***We need structural and carefully considered reform.***

Currently, the scheme is mismanaged, fragmented, structurally unsound and most importantly, lacks proper oversight. What concerns me the most is that the people with the most severe intellectual and physical disabilities are the ones being harmed by this fragmentation. This inefficiency not only wastes taxpayer money, it leaves ***participants with complex needs unsupported and exposed to neglect and abuse.***

The following submission outlines critical reforms which I strongly believe are needed to professionalise the workforce, strengthen governance, and reinvest NDIS funds into permanent disability infrastructure.

PROFESSIONALISE THE ENTIRE DISABILITY WORKFORCE - the current model - where anyone can become an independent support worker with minimal or no training - is both unsafe and unsustainable. It has created a workforce that is inconsistent, unskilled, unregulated and impossible to oversee. I strongly recommend that the NDIS consider the following suggestions, which will dramatically reduce neglect, abuse, harm, exploitation, fraud and price inflation. It would create a professional, accountable workforce similar to nursing, childhood education, and aged care - ***not an unmonitored "gig economy"***.

- Abolish individual support workers as a category.
- Require all disability workers to operate under a registered organisation.
- Require all organisations to be registered.
- Ensure organisations take full responsibility for training, supervision, safety and quality.
- Enforce a single, consistent set of rules across the entire sector.

Currently, the NDIA is trying to oversee tens of thousands of fragmented micro-businesses which is simply impossible. A professionalised workforce would make oversight achievable.

REINVEST NDIS FUNDS INTO PERMANENT DISABILITY INFRASTRUCTURE - Right now, too much NDIS money flows out of the disability sector into middlemen, labour-hire companies, fraudulent providers and administration. The people with the highest needs are left without:

- purpose-built respite facilities, instead relying on inaccessible Airbnbs and hotels.
- skilled staff in Supported Independent Living. ***The presence of an unskilled workforce has resulted in widespread abuse, neglect, and in many cases, preventable deaths.***
- complex-care hubs focused on effective behavioural management and participant safety.
- meaningful day programs, instead relying on the community as makeshift hubs. Many participants are required to spend up to 9 hours a day in the community due to lack of appropriate facilities.

To ensure long-term sustainability we must reinvest NDIS money back into disability infrastructure. Registered organisations should be incentivised - or required - to put a certain percentage of their revenue into building facilities that will remain in the sector for future generations.

This approach would stabilise supports, reduce long-term costs, and end the dependence on the community as an improvised “makeshift facility”. It honours the original promise of the NDIS.

STRENGTHEN NDIA GOVERNANCE AND CLINICAL OVERSIGHT - delegates are currently expected to make ***life-altering decisions with little training, no clinical oversight and inconsistent standards which leads to:***

- unnecessary reviews, e.g. people with life-long, permanent disabilities having to provide ***identical evidence*** of their disability year after year after year, or are left with unsustainable supports whilst awaiting internal reviews and tribunals, placing their lives at great risk and unnecessary burdens on their carers.
- administrative cost blowouts.
- decisions that directly harm participants.

The NDIS must become a competent, clinically-guided organisation with:

- skilled decision-makers.
- consistent processes.
- transparent reasoning.
- reduced bureaucracy.

Participants and carers should not be forced to carry the managerial load, nor the administrative errors of the scheme.

STRENGTHEN REGULATION, NOT RATIONING - Many experts agree that the NDIS needs to be properly regulated. Strong oversight, price controls, auditing and workforce standards would save potentially billions without reducing essential support.

- ***enforce minimum quality standards and accountability for all organisations, support providers and NDIA delegates.***

The NDIS is one of Australia's most important social programs. Without structural reform - especially workforce reform and long-term infrastructure investment - it will continue to not only fail participants and their carers, it will be unsustainable long-term, leaving future generations to deal with the consequences.

I submit this email to the committee in the hope it informs inquiries, hearings, or reports, and I kindly request that it be circulated to all committee members as appropriate. I urge you to advocate for a professionalised disability workforce, strong regulation, real clinical oversight, and investment in permanent disability infrastructure. These reforms will protect lives, save money and restore the integrity of the scheme.

Thank you for your attention and advocacy, on behalf of people with a disability and their carers,

Kind regards

Julie Lewis
Carer (26 years front-line experience)