



Submission to the NDIS Joint Standing Committee (General Issues)

Prepared by Every Australian Counts

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1. Introduction

Every Australian Counts (EAC) thanks the Joint Standing Committee on the National Disability Insurance Scheme (the Committee) for the opportunity to make this submission.

EAC is a grassroots campaign made up of people with disability, their families and carers, and the people who work alongside them. Our mission is to make sure the NDIS works for the people it was designed to support. We work to amplify the voices of people with disability and to ensure their experiences shape policy and implementation.

This submission provides a summary of select work undertaken by EAC between October 2024 to August 2025, covering a critical period following the passage of the *NDIS Amendment Bill 2024*.¹ It draws on our ongoing, close engagement with the disability community during this time.

The views presented here reflect the concerns, insights, and priorities shared with us directly by people with disability, their families, carers, and advocates. As always, our goal is to ensure the perspectives of those most affected by NDIS policy are front and centre in decision-making.

2. December 2024 – Community Survey on Implementation of the *NDIS Amendment Bill 2024*²

Following the 2024 NDIS legislative changes, EAC surveyed the disability community to understand awareness, sentiment, and early impacts. The survey had over 450 responses in total and included NDIS participants, family members and nominees, advocates, and service providers, with representation from both First Nations and culturally and linguistically diverse (CaRM) / culturally and racially marginalised (CaRM) communities. Only one in four respondents felt they understood the changes well, while over one in five reported little or no understanding. Many described a lack of accessible information and support to navigate the new requirements.

Community sentiment was overwhelmingly negative. 61% of respondents expressed either “very” or “somewhat” negative reactions to the changes, compared with fewer than 5% who reported a positive view. 65% stated they did not feel supported or informed, and only 5% felt adequately equipped to adapt. Concerns centred on more rigorous eligibility reassessments and evidence

¹ Parliament of Australia. (2024). [National Disability Insurance Scheme Amendment \(Getting the NDIS Back on Track No. 1\) Bill 2024](#).

² [Community Feedback on NDIS Legislation Changes - Every Australian Counts](#)

requirements, new support needs assessments, restrictions on what can be purchased within plans, and significantly shorter plan durations. Participants also reported difficulties with new plan applications.

At December 2024, 63% of respondents said they had experienced more problems with the NDIS, including losing essential supports, facing increased barriers to access, and having reduced choice and control over plans. Just 10% believed the changes met the community's needs, while over half felt they did not align with participant interests at all.

3. February 2025: Take the Time for Codesign: 255 Organisations Seek More Time to Codesign NDIS Reforms³

In February 2025, a coalition of 255 disability organisations, including EAC, issued a united call seeking a significant extension to co-design timelines for upcoming NDIS structural reforms. Their core concern is that the government is proceeding too rapidly with critical changes, including new support needs assessments and budget-setting tools scheduled for rollout by September 1, 2025.

Participants highlight that this aggressive timeline conflicts with the Independent NDIS Review's recommendation of 2 to 5 years for proper co-design and piloting to ensure safety and effectiveness. Many respondents describe the ongoing eligibility reassessment process as unprecedented, noting that roughly 1,200 participants undergo reassessments weekly, with nearly half being removed from the Scheme based on just 28 days' notice and minimal communication about missing evidence. This practice, they argue, risks breaching human rights obligations and undermining participant wellbeing.

Signatories urged the government to delay the rollout, meaningfully engage people with disability in tool design and implementation, and establish foundational support in advance to prevent individuals from falling through the cracks. The shared concerns within the Statement, demonstrated through widespread organisational endorsements, makes clear that rushed, non-consultative reforms pose real danger to the system's integrity and the people it serves.

³Every Australian Counts. (2025). [Media Release: Take the Time for Codesign: 255 Organisations Demand More Time to Codesign NDIS Reforms.](#)

4. March 2025- Election Priorities identified by the disability community⁴

In early 2025, EAC conducted a community survey⁵ to identify the most pressing NDIS-related issues ahead of the federal election. The findings reflect strong and clear priorities from people with disability, their families, carers, and advocates.

Leading the list. 58% of respondents raised concerns around preserving choice and control over providers, including the right to access unregistered providers. Many participants stressed that limiting options, especially in rural and regional areas where registered providers are scarce, directly undermines the individualized approach at the heart of the NDIS.

Equally prominent, at 58%, were calls for urgent reform of the NDIS Support Lists, which are seen as prescriptive and restrictive, reducing flexibility and weakening participant autonomy.

Fears about the fairness of Support Needs Assessments were raised by 49% of respondents, expressing worries that these assessments could be inconsistent or harmful if implemented without transparency and proper safeguards.

Nearly half (46%) urged that more time be allocated to genuine co-design, emphasising that rushed reform processes risk unsafe or ill-fitting outcomes.

Finally, 29% underscored the importance of protecting the right not to be forced into group homes, highlighting housing as a critical area of autonomy and dignity for people with disability. These findings underscore that policies restoring flexibility, fairness, and genuine participant involvement are essential to uphold the NDIS's founding principles of choice, control, and person-centred support.

5. Joint Statement on the new NDIS Funding Periods⁶

EAC, together with a coalition of leading disability rights organisations, issued a joint statement in response to the NDIS's sudden introduction of new funding periods from 19 May 2025. The changes mean that instead of receiving their total annual budget upfront, most participants now

⁴ Every Australian Counts. (2025, April 15). [Your Top 5 Election Priorities - What You Told Us - Every Australian Counts](#)

⁵ Every Australian Counts. (2025, March 27). [Help Shape Our Next Campaign – Tell Us Your Top NDIS Priorities](#).

⁶ Every Australian Counts (2025, July 8). [Joint Statement on New NDIS Funding Periods – from Every Australian Counts and Disability Rights Organisations](#)

have their NDIS funds released in quarterly installments, with some supports, such as Home and Living supports, funded monthly. The joint statement was written to voice the widespread concern, confusion, and frustration this change has caused across the disability community.

The signatories stressed that this reform undermines the Scheme's core principles of choice, control, and flexibility. Quarterly and monthly funding cycles do not reflect the realities of people's lives—especially for participants with complex, irregular, or front-loaded support needs, or those living in rural and remote areas. The statement also highlighted the risk of service interruptions, increased administrative burden for self-managers, and payment delays for providers.

EAC's role was to coordinate community voices, amplify lived-experience perspectives, and ensure decision-makers understood the real-world impacts. The joint statement calls for 12-month funding to remain the default, shorter periods to be optional, and for future changes to be transparently communicated, co-designed, and tested with the community before implementation.

6. The impact of NDIS Support Lists (Section 10)⁷

Between late June and early July 2025, EAC conducted a national survey to gather feedback on the impact of the NDIS's newly introduced Support Lists, which determine which supports are funded as "in" or "out." The survey, which received 548 responses from participants, family members, carers, providers, and advocates, including over one-third from regional, rural, or remote communities, revealed widespread confusion, fear, and unmet needs.

More than half of respondents reported losing access to supports that had previously been critical to their daily lives, such as assistive technology and essential equipment. The impact was particularly severe in regional and remote areas, where service markets are thin and flexibility is vital. An overwhelming majority felt the government had failed to adequately assess the risks of the changes, and very few believed these risks were being managed appropriately.

Three-quarters of respondents had already encountered problems under the new rules, most commonly citing conflicting information from NDIA staff, reduced flexibility in their plans, and confusion about what supports were allowed. Many described the removal of previously funded supports and real threats to their safety, health, and wellbeing. One participant explained that their

⁷ Every Australian Counts (2025, July 25). [Every Australian Counts Survey Results Highlight Impact of NDIS Support Lists](#)

life depended on home automation tools that were now excluded, stating simply, “I would be dead” without them.

Accessing replacement supports was also a major concern. Participants reported the process was unclear, slow, and bogged down by administrative hurdles, such as requiring letters from providers to unlock alternative supports. These delays often left people without vital assistance for weeks or even months. The emotional toll of navigating these changes was significant. Many respondents reported heightened anxiety, exhaustion, and distress. Parents of children with disability described compounded burdens, coping with uncertainty while managing additional administrative tasks—often without any support or compensation for their time and effort.

The findings point to an urgent need for reform. Policy changes must be co-designed with people with disability, communications must be clear and consistent, and robust risk assessments must be built into the rollout of any new rules. Accessible appeal pathways are essential to restore trust and to ensure that the Scheme remains true to its core principles of choice, control, and participant-centred design. EAC remains committed to ensuring the voices of people with disability are at the heart of these discussions and drive meaningful change.

EAC has also lodged a detailed submission to the DSS consultation on the NDIS Support Lists, outlining extensive problems with the current “In” and “Out” lists, including widespread confusion, contradictory guidance, harmful exclusions, and a replacement supports process that is slow, complex, and inequitable. That submission calls for:

- **Replacing the current lists with a principles-based model** that prioritises participant choice and flexibility, or at minimum moving to an inclusion-only list with broadly defined categories.
- **Removing harmful exclusions and redefining “standard” items** based on their functional benefit, not whether they are bespoke or commercially available.
- **Abolishing or overhauling the replacement supports process** so participants can access low-cost or equivalent supports quickly and without excessive administrative burden.
- Ensuring clear definitions, **consistent application**, and **comprehensive staff training** to eliminate contradictory advice and confusion.
- Embedding genuine co-design in the development and review of all NDIS rules, with diverse lived experience represented.

- Guaranteeing **no withdrawal of NDIS supports** until **comparable Foundational Supports** are fully funded, accessible, and operational.
- **Clarifying system interfaces** so that responsibility for excluded supports is clearly assigned and gaps are closed.
- Funding a **national independent disability advocacy service** (as recommended in the final report of the Disability Royal Commission⁸) to help participants navigate and challenge service gaps.

7. The Economic Benefits of the NDIS

EAC recognises that the NDIS is far more than a social program. It is essential national economic infrastructure. In August 2025, a member of our Steering Committee attended the Tasmanian Economic Roundtable to ensure the voices of people with disability informed discussions feeding directly into the Federal Economic Roundtable. To support these discussions, EAC developed two complementary papers outlining the economic and social return on investment from the NDIS, and the systemic inefficiencies that must be addressed to secure its long-term sustainability.

Paper 1: NDIS Investment – Economic and Social Returns for Australia’s Future

This paper outlined the clear economic case for maintaining and strengthening the NDIS, drawing on modelling and lived experience evidence. Key points included:

- High return on investment – modelling by the Productivity Commission shows that every \$1 invested in the NDIS generates \$2.25 in economic output, with long-term GDP growth of ~1% by 2050.
Workforce participation gains – appropriate supports enable people with disability and carers, especially women, to enter and remain in the labour force, increasing productivity and tax revenue.
- Regional economic stimulus – NDIS spending sustains local jobs, attracts skilled workers, and supports small businesses, particularly in regional, rural, and remote areas.

⁸ Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People with Disability. (2023). [Final Report: Executive Summary. Our Vision for an Inclusive Australia and Recommendations](#). Commonwealth of Australia, pp. 287-288.

- Cost prevention – early intervention and appropriate supports reduce reliance on high-cost crisis services in health, aged care, housing, and justice systems.

The paper also warned that restrictive rules such as the “In” and “Out” lists undermine these benefits by creating inefficiencies, forcing higher-cost alternatives, and reducing participation.

Paper 2: Disability Systemic Economic Issues

This paper examined how inefficiencies, poor governance, and restrictive policy settings within the NDIA are driving up costs and reducing the Scheme’s economic impact. It identified key systemic issues, including:

- Administrative churn – unnecessary reassessments, excessive evidence requirements for permanent conditions, and over-reliance on external contractors and consultants increase costs without improving outcomes.
 - Inefficient policy design – restrictive and overly prescriptive rules limit flexibility, preventing participants from selecting the most cost-effective and appropriate supports for their needs. This often results in higher-cost, less effective alternatives and reduces the overall efficiency and value of the Scheme.
 - Workforce challenges – inflexible funding models undermine the viability of diverse and community-led service providers, reducing innovation and limiting culturally safe, tailored supports.
- Fragmented accountability – lack of independent oversight allows inefficiencies and poor decision-making to persist, eroding trust and value for money.
- Rights-based gaps – absence of a legislative framework that embeds a positive duty to prevent discrimination and uphold inclusion limits economic participation of people with disability and perpetuates inequality in systems such as the NDIA.

The paper’s recommendations focus on restoring the original “reasonable and necessary” criteria, streamlining evidence and review processes, ensuring transparent governance and oversight, supporting diverse workforce models, and embedding human rights into disability policy and law.

8. EAC Opinion Blog – Voices of People with Disability⁹

Every Australian Counts maintains an active [Opinion Blog](#) (“News Hub → Opinion”) on our website, which serves as a vital platform for sharing lived experience, explaining policy issues, and shaping public conversation around the NDIS. Contributors include NDIS participants, advocates, and steering committee members.

Recent posts have spotlighted some of the most pressing issues in the current policy environment:

- [“Community responses to NDIS therapy funding cuts highlight what really matters: Australia’s deep commitment to the NDIS”](#) by Muriel Cummins (July 2025) underscores overwhelming community concern that proposed therapy funding cuts threaten access to allied health support – particularly for those in rural and remote settings – and reaffirm the deep public commitment to choice, equity, and a well-functioning NDIS.
- [“A Day in the Life of an SRS Resident: Reflections on the Need for Safe, Sustainable NDIS Housing Options”](#) (May 2025) offers a poignant personal glimpse into the housing experiences of Supported Residential Service residents and highlights the urgent need for safe, participant-led housing alternatives.
- [“Why It’s Time to Move Beyond Group Homes” by Jarrod Sandell-Hay](#) (May 2025) critiques how group homes – originally intended as progressive alternatives to institutional care – continue to undermine autonomy and choice, calling instead for truly individualized living options under the NDIS.
- [“NDIA Hits Reset on Co-Design – Here’s What It Means for You”](#) by Nick Avery (April 2025) examines the NDIA’s announcement of a “reset” in co-design processes, clarifying what people with disability can expect and emphasizing the importance of authentic engagement in all stages of reform.
- [“Foundational Supports: A new lifeboat or a disguise to capsize us?”](#) by Heidi La Paglia Reid (February 2025) interrogates the proposed Foundational Supports model, services intended to be available outside the NDIS, warning it must not be used to phase people off the Scheme before equivalent community-based supports are fully in place.

⁹ Every Australian Counts. (2025). [News Hub Opinion](#).

9. Conclusion

The period since the passage of the NDIS Amendment Bill 2024 has been one of unprecedented change for participants, families, and providers. EAC's engagement with thousands of community members over the past year has revealed consistent themes: reforms are being implemented too quickly, with insufficient co-design, unclear communication, and inadequate safeguards. The result has been confusion, distress, loss of essential supports, and growing mistrust in the Scheme's governance.

At the same time, the NDIS continues to deliver significant economic and social returns when it operates as intended, enabling people with disability to participate fully in work, education, and community life, while supporting local economies and preventing higher downstream costs. However, these benefits are jeopardised by restrictive rules, inefficient processes, and policy settings that undermine flexibility and choice.

EAC urges the Committee to take these findings seriously and to recommend the government take the time to work with the community on all future changes to the NDIS; restore participant choice and control in the NDIS; and commit to an equitable NDIS for all Australians living with substantial disability. A sustainable, participant-centred NDIS, backed by robust governance and a rights-based framework, will not only honour Australia's human rights obligations but also deliver lasting economic and social dividends for the nation.