Questions on notice

- **What do you believe could be done to better recognise the 'importance and uniqueness of the middle childhood and adolescent period' for children with disability?**

Middle childhood (generally considered to be between the ages of 6 to 12 years) and adolescence (13 to 19 years) are key periods of growth and development for all children, including those with disability.

The experiences and support children receive in these periods, along with early childhood, help to set them up for better outcomes throughout their lives, including in health, education, emotional development and attachment, and decision-making approaches.[1] Creating a supportive environment for social development and building emotional competence can be an important protective factor for children in the middle years.[2]

The educational environment is a key setting for children and adolescents' development, and this is equally the case for children with disability. School transition points, such as the move from primary to high school, or the final years of high school and transition out of school, can be periods of high stress for children.[3] Greater support and recognition needs to be provided around the transition points for students with disability, where the stress and disruption of these changes can be compounded. Developing a national

[1] US Office of Disease Prevention and Health Promotion. (2020) *Early and Middle Childhood Overview*, HealthyPeople.gov [accessed: https://www.healthypeople.gov/2020/topics-objectives/topic/early-and-middle-childhood]

[2] Toumbourou, J.W., Hall, J., Varcoe J., and Leung R. (2014) *Review of key risk and protective factors for child development and wellbeing (antenatal to age 25)*. Australian Research Alliance for Children and Young People.

[3] Zwiers, M. L. (2017) 'How to help your kids transition to high school,' *The Conversation*. [accessed: https://theconversation.com/how-to-help-your-kids-transition-to-high-school-81018]

inclusive education plan[4] would create a national framework through which relevant stakeholders, including state and territory education departments, could design more streamlined and targeted support to assist children through the transition points.

Updating the NDIS' approach to childhood, by building on the differentiated ECEI approach for younger children and formally recognising the importance of the middle childhood and adolescent periods for children's development, would also provide increased opportunity for responsive support to be provided to children as their needs change.

A final element of improving the response for children and young people with disability in middle childhood and adolescence is promoting and supporting peer relationships. Relationships with families and friends change as children develop through this period, with peer relationships generally taking on greater weight.[5] CYDA regularly receives feedback from our members about the importance of friendships in the lives of children and young people with disability, and the proactive ways that schools can support their development – and similarly of the ways in which non-inclusive school environments can significantly inhibit the development of peer relationships.

- **Referring to page 5 of your submission - what steps do you think could be taken in order to 'Improve current employment conditions of NDIS workforce to improve recruitment, retention and quality, targeting areas of critical workforce shortages.'?**

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[4] This plan would span the education journey from early childhood and include the post-school transition period.

[5] Nickerson, A. B., & Nagle, R. J. (2005). Parent and Peer Attachment in Late Childhood and Early Adolescence. *The Journal of Early Adolescence*, 25(2), 223–249. https://doi.org/10.1177/0272431604274174

The workforce challenges in the NDIS and broader disability workforce are well documented and have been highlighted recently through the COVID-19 pandemic.

In particular, much work has been undertaken by the Social Policy Research Centre at the University of New South Wales. CYDA supports key findings from this work, specifically the need for:

- Additional support for supervision[6]
- A comprehensive NDIS pricing approach that:
    - includes adequate time for supervision, ongoing training, administration, and other key parts of high quality service delivery
    - offers opportunities for career development and progression[7]

A 2020 survey of more than 2,000 disability support workers confirmed that "Australia's disability service system has been predicated on the undervaluation of support work, and on under-resourcing of frontline service delivery."[8]

In the longer term, improving disability workforce conditions and increasing the overall quality of care will require changes in broader societal attitudes towards people with disability, in line with a human rights approach, as well as changes to the value our community places on this important care work.

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[6] Cortis, N. (2017). Working under NDIS: insights from a survey of employees in disability services (SPRC Report 13/17). Sydney: Social Policy Research Centre, UNSW Sydney. http://doi.org/10.4225/53/5988fd78da2bc

[7] Cortis, N., Macdonald, F., Davidson, B., and Bentham, E. (2017). Reasonable, necessary and valued: Pricing disability services for quality support and decent jobs (SPRC Report 10/17). Sydney: Social Policy Research Centre, UNSW Sydney.

[8] Cortis, N., & van Toorn, G. (2020). Working in new disability markets: A survey of Australia's disability workforce Sydney: Social Policy Research Centre, UNSW Sydney, p.94. http://doi.org/10.26190/5eb8b85e97714.