



Questions and Answers: Foundational Supports and Thriving Kids

3 February 2026

How will Thriving Kids affect children accessing the NDIS now?

Children aged 8 and under enrolled in the NDIS prior to 1 January 2028 with developmental delay and/or autism with low to moderate support needs will be subject to reassessment under the eligibility criteria in place prior to 1 January 2028.

Children with permanent and significant disability and children aged 8 and under with developmental delay and/or autism who have substantially reduced functional capacity (high support needs), will remain eligible for the NDIS.

When will Thriving Kids start?

Thriving Kids will start rolling out state services no later than 1 October 2026 and is expected to be at scale from 1 January 2028.

The rollout of Thriving Kids supports will ensure national services are in place ahead of changes to NDIS access arrangements from 1 January 2028.

More information on how to access information, advice and relevant services will be shared closer to supports commencing.

Is Thriving Kids ‘one size fits all’?

There will be a range of different kinds of services and supports under Thriving Kids. Each child’s needs and circumstances will guide decisions about which Thriving Kids services and supports are best suited for them and their family. Children and families will access supports matched to their needs.

What role have state and territory governments played in the design of Thriving Kids?

The Australian Government has been working closely with state and territory governments on Foundational Supports and Thriving Kids since late 2023.

All governments have engaged deeply over several years to share insights and collaboratively contribute to the broader reform process.

What will the different levels of government deliver under Thriving Kids?

Governments have agreed that states and territories will deliver general parenting supports, local information, advice and navigation, and targeted allied health supports under Thriving Kids. The Australian Government is responsible for national measures that will enable the program to operate effectively — including information and awareness activities, online and phone advice including wayfinding assistance, workforce initiatives, and program evaluation.

What does the Australian Government mean by ‘low to moderate support needs’? Will children with Level 1 or Level 2 autism diagnoses be removed from the NDIS?

‘Support needs’ refers to the abilities and needs of children based on their functional capacity, rather than a formal diagnosis. Considering support needs helps to match children and families to the right supports.

The NDIS will continue to support children with permanent and significant disability and children aged 8 and under with developmental delay and/or autism who have substantially reduced functional capacity (high support needs), consistent with the Scheme’s original intent. This reform is about supporting people in a way most suited to the level of assistance they require.

Thriving Kids will support children with developmental delay and/or autism with low to moderate support needs and their families.

Children aged 8 and under enrolled in the NDIS prior to 1 January 2028 with developmental delay and/or autism with low to moderate support needs will be subject to reassessment under the eligibility criteria in place prior to 1 January 2028.

Why are autistic children being ‘targeted’?

Every child grows and learns in their own unique way. For some, extra support can help them build skills and confidence. Access to Thriving Kids is not based on diagnosis but on the developmental support needs of a child.

For children with neurodevelopmental differences such as autism, early assistance can make a big difference in helping them thrive, including by supporting those in their life better understand their individual communication styles, skills and needs and to support them as they grow and learn.

Thriving Kids focuses on identifying children that have additional developmental support needs early in their developmental journey and offering supports to them and their families and carers. For many parents who have a concern about their child's development, they do not always know where to go for support or turn to the NDIS as there are no other alternatives.

All governments have acknowledged that we need to build an alternative system of supports tailored to support children's development and which supports better outcomes.

Has the Australian Government spoken to parents of children with development delays and people with disability about Thriving Kids?

The Australian Government has been talking to, and hearing from, people with disability and their families about the need to reform the NDIS and establish additional supports outside the NDIS for some time.

This includes input from the disability community and their families, including through the substantial contributions made to the Independent Review of the NDIS. It also includes input from over 4,000 people and organisations in national public consultations on Foundational Supports held from September to December 2024.

The Standing Committee on Health, Aged Care and Disability inquiry into Thriving Kids (the Inquiry) received 1,194 survey responses and almost 500 groups and individuals via submissions or appearances at public hearings. This included federal, state and territory departments and agencies, industry groups and peak bodies, academics, health practitioners, medical organisations and the public.

The Thriving Kids Advisory Group has also provided advice to government, which includes learnings from their networks, academic backgrounds and experience.

Some state and territory governments have also been engaging locally to inform their thinking, and the Australian Government has also been engaging with a number of representative organisations. Stakeholder views from these consultations or engagement are helping to inform the design of supports that will best benefit families.

Governments will continue to engage with the community throughout implementation.

How was the membership for the Thriving Kids Advisory Group selected?

The Department of Health, Disability and Ageing (the department) worked with Professor Frank Oberklaid AM as co-Chair, based on his extensive experience in child health and development. Members were identified based on the type and level of

expertise required, representation across different demographics and intersectional backgrounds.

Membership was selected to bring together diverse expertise across paediatrics, child development, research, disability, child and family services, health care, lived experience, early education and schools, and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives.

State and territory representatives were invited to contribute knowledge of local service systems and to act as a conduit to other jurisdictions.

The selection and appointment process for Advisory Group members was conducted in accordance with departmental policies and procedures for external committee appointments.

Were there any members with lived experience on the Thriving Kids Advisory Group? Who did members hear from?

The Advisory Group included membership from a lived experience parent representative who has experienced the process of seeking support for a child with developmental delay or disability.

As part of the Advisory Group's work to design Thriving Kids, the Advisory Group held 5 detailed deep-dive workshops with a broad range of stakeholders, on key aspects of their Thriving Kids model.

From October to December 2025, the Advisory Group tested their draft Thriving Kids model with a range of stakeholder forums, via some targeted sessions with people with lived experience (supported by engagement specialists The Social Deck) and through expert stakeholder networks. Members also tested elements with their wider networks. The department also convened meetings with some broader stakeholders on behalf of the Advisory Group.

The Advisory Group also considered the findings of the:

- Independent Review into the NDIS
- public consultations on Foundational Supports held at the end of 2024
- views from stakeholder networks and
- insights from the House Standing Committee Inquiry into Thriving Kids.

Has the Thriving Kids Advisory Group report incorporated recommendations of the House Standing Committee on Health, Aged Care, and Disability Inquiry into Thriving Kids?

Almost 500 people and organisations provided submission or gave evidence to the Inquiry and over 1,190 people provided responses to the Inquiry's survey, including people with lived experience and families, carers, and kin of children with developmental delay or autism.

The Chair and Deputy Chair of the Inquiry presented to the Advisory Group twice during their period of deliberations to ensure that the stakeholder perspectives canvassed as part of the Inquiry could inform the Advisory Group's advice.