



## NDIS Reform Advisory Committee

### Meeting Summary – Friday 17 April 2026

The NDIS Reform Advisory Committee met on 17 April 2026. The Co-Chairs acknowledged the intensity of current reform activity and the heightened level of uncertainty ahead of upcoming government decisions, highlighting the importance of grounding discussions in the real-world experiences of people with disability, families and carers.

In their opening remarks, the Co-Chairs acknowledged ongoing community concern arising from negative and inaccurate public messaging about the NDIS and reform activity. They said current media coverage is contributing to anxiety, stigma and erosion of trust, and stressed the importance of clear, timely and trusted communication throughout the reform process. Members raised this concern consistently across agenda items during this meeting about the impact of negative media articles about the NDIS.

Ms Mary Wood, Deputy Secretary, Disability and Carers Group, Department of Health, Disability and Ageing (DHDA), addressed the Committee. Ms Wood outlined key reform priorities, interdependencies across streams, and considerations for reform readiness, sequencing and implementation. Ms Wood said that current reform priorities are focused on stabilising the NDIS and rebuilding public confidence through improved fiscal management, integrity and governance, while preserving the core goals of participant choice and control. She emphasised the importance of reform readiness and sequencing, noting the need to align changes to planning, assessment, provider regulation and foundational supports so they operate coherently as a system. Ms Wood said that implementation must balance fiscal sustainability with social equity, and ensure reforms are developed and rolled out in a way that is informed by lived experience and avoids unintended consequences.

During discussion with Ms Wood, members reinforced the concerns raised in the opening remarks about misinformation and negative media coverage. Members described harm being experienced by people with disability and families, including heightened anxiety, confusion and loss of confidence in reform processes. They emphasised that speculative public messaging undermines trust and places more pressure on RAC members and other community leaders as trusted sources of information. Ms Wood acknowledged members' concerns. She noted that during policy development, Cabinet consideration and Budget processes, government is often limited in what it can publicly confirm or rebut. She emphasised the importance of focusing on clear, correct communication as decisions are made and understands the frustration this creates for communities and trusted intermediaries during periods of uncertainty.

Members sought clarity on the role, scope and duration of the NDIS Sustainability Taskforce, the transparency of its work, and how consultation with the RAC would occur as reform options progress. Members emphasised the importance of applying a social model for disability, recognising the diversity of views within the disability community, and ensuring lived experience continues to inform policy development. Ms Wood said that the NDIS Sustainability Taskforce is a temporary, Commonwealth

public service mechanism set up to respond to National Cabinet commitments. It is focused on NDIS cost growth, rather than a decision-making or representative body. She noted that its purpose is to find potential financial and integrity measures for Government consideration through Cabinet processes. Ms Wood acknowledged the diversity of views within the disability community and confirmed the importance of the RAC's role in grounding reform discussions in lived experience, while noting constraints on public communication during Budget and Cabinet consideration periods.

Ms Lisha Jackman, Assistant Secretary, Thriving Kids Taskforce, DHDA, provided an update on Thriving Kids and the National Agreement on Foundational Supports for children aged 0–8 with developmental delay or autism and low-to-moderate support needs. Ms Jackman outlined the national model, governance arrangements, and the roles of the Commonwealth and states and territories, along with next steps for implementation including bilateral agreements, phased rollout and further engagement.

In discussion, members sought clarity on how the model would work in practice, including eligibility settings, definitions of low-to-moderate support needs, transition arrangements from the NDIS and timelines for implementation. Members stressed the importance of clearly distinguishing parental responsibility from funded supports and recognising that children's needs and family capacity change over time. Members again raised concerns about the impact of misinformation and partial information on families navigating Thriving Kids, noting that heightened anxiety and negative public messaging increases uncertainty during transitions, particularly for First Nations, CALD and rural and remote communities. Members emphasised the importance of simple, culturally appropriate navigation and communication, and highlighted the risks associated with interactions with education and child-protection systems if not carefully designed. It was reinforced that continued engagement with the RAC was vital to support fair, trauma-informed implementation and avoid unintended harm.

Ms Jackman clarified Thriving Kids is the first phase of the National Agreement on Foundational Supports and is intended to work alongside, rather than replace, the NDIS for children with permanent and significant disability. She outlined that the national model sets up core components and principles, with flexibility for states and territories to tailor delivery to local contexts. Officials acknowledged the complexity of defining low-to-moderate support needs and said that further work is underway with states and territories to refine cohort definitions, transition arrangements and implementation planning, informed by member feedback on navigation, cultural safety and communication.

Ms Jo Collins, Acting General Manager, Strategic Communications, and Ms Laura Ryan, Branch Manager, Communications and Media, NDIA, provided an update on the Agency's approach to NDIS reform communications. They acknowledged earlier shortcomings and outlined a renewed focus on clear, participant-facing, plain-English communication. She said communication would be delivered in stages to support understanding and to prepare people for change, using a range of channels including direct emails, newsletters, webinars, explainer videos, easy-read materials and media engagement.

Members welcomed improvements in accessibility and direct communication but reiterated that current efforts are not sufficient to counter the scale, speed and consistency of misinformation or Scheme changes and cuts. Members emphasised that easy-read materials alone are insufficient for many participants who use support for decision-making and called for communications designed for use with supporters, peers and trusted intermediaries. Members again highlighted the importance of culturally appropriate communications for First Nations, CALD and remote communities, including the use of

trusted third-party organisations and paid partnerships. Consistency, simple language and clear explanations of what reforms do and do not mean were emphasised as critical to reducing anxiety and confusion.

NDIA officials advised they are seeking better ways to monitor and engage with interactive and two-way communications, including moderated engagement on social platforms. Officials said communications will increasingly be tailored as different audiences, with a shift toward more direct, individualised messaging over time. They also confirmed communications products are being tested with people to inform refinement prior to broader rollout. They noted that the timing and detail of future communications will remain dependent on Government decisions being finalised.

Ms Sarah Hawke, Assistant Secretary, NDIS Legislation, Policy and Engagement Branch, DHDA, provided an update on the status of NDIS Rules and New Framework Planning. Ms Hawke noted the elevated level of uncertainty ahead of upcoming government decisions, including the Federal Budget and Minister Butler's National Press Club address, and advised feedback from recent consultation has been combined into a draft report provided to Ministers. More consultation on NDIS Supports Rules would not go ahead until detail on the Support Needs Assessment and budget methodology is available.

Members welcomed the overview but reiterated concerns about compressed timelines and the risks associated with consulting on partial or incomplete rules. Members again noted misinformation and uncertainty are compounding these risks by fuelling speculation and undermining confidence among participants, families and jurisdictions. Members stressed the need for transparency about assessor qualifications, consistency of assessments, safeguards, review and appeal pathways, and any proposed use of automation. Jurisdictional ex-officio members noted similar concerns at state and territory level, particularly the difficulty of advising Ministers without a clearer end-to-end picture.

The Co-Chairs provided an update on recent RAC activity, noting a focus on finalising formal advice to the Disability Reform Ministerial Council, progressing the six-monthly report and refining the RAC work plan. Engagement with Ministers' offices and external forums has continued, with a focus on listening to community concerns and monitoring public narrative ahead of upcoming announcements.

In closing reflections and jurisdictional updates, members reiterated the cumulative emotional toll of ongoing misinformation, negative media and reform pressures. Members described increased stigma, racism and distress experienced by people with disability and families, particularly in migrant, refugee and First Nations communities, and noted rising demands on RAC members as trusted points of contact. The Committee emphasised the importance of mutual support, solidarity and clear, trusted communication as reforms progress through the next phase.

The next meeting is scheduled for 22 May 2026.