



# **Ability First Australia**

## **Policy Priorities 2022**

### **Plain language version – December 2021**

## **About this document**

This document includes our recommendations for disability sector policy priorities in 2022.

This document includes recommendations to:

- the NDIA
- the NDIS Quality and Safeguards Commission
- government
- disability service providers.

## **A positive customer experience**

### **Our aim**

Our aim is to make sure the NDIS marketplace is:

- fair
- sustainable
- effective.

NDIS participants receive varied and inconsistent customer service. People with complex disabilities are particularly vulnerable to receiving inconsistent services.

## **What should happen next?**

### **Engage with the disability community**

Policy makers, agencies and providers should engage with people with disability. All government policy should reflect the voice of the disability community.

### **Understand the participant journey**

The NDIA should map the NDIS journey for:

- participants
- service providers.

A journey map will reveal areas of the process to improve.

### **Make a roadmap**

We recommend that the NDIA develop a logical roadmap to:

- facilitate clear communication
- support consistent and timely decision-making.

The roadmap should include clear business processes and commercial trading terms.

The NDIA should publish this roadmap and progressively implement, supported by appropriate communication and reporting.

## **Sustainability**

### **Our aim**

Our aim is to make sure NDIS participants have genuine choice. For example, the opportunity to choose from as many service providers as a market can sustain.

### **Amend pricing**

System pricing must allow disability service providers to make a return.

When providers make a return, they are supported to:

- invest in innovation
- commit to continuous service improvement
- invest capital for service infrastructure
- train and support quality staff.

### **Review pricing regularly**

Pricing must be reviewed regularly to ensure providers can adapt to the complex nature of the disability sector. This is particularly relevant for services delivered to people with complex disabilities.

The constant policy shifts and administrative overlays across all agencies have a significant impact on the viability of providers. Providers require pricing certainty and consistency in order to make investment decisions.

The NDIA should focus on:

- streamlining business processes
- minimising transaction costs within the scheme and across the NDIA and NDIS Commission.

The NDIA needs to work with service providers to understand the true cost of service delivery.

## Quality and Safeguards

### Our aim

Our aim is to make sure the NDIS commission focuses on priorities that truly matter. For example, we'd like the commission to:

- reduce administrative load
- simplify reporting procedures
- ensure that reporting requirements align to the needs of people with disability.

## What should happen next?

### Improve reporting processes

Complex reporting is a major concern for disability service providers. We acknowledge the Commission's valid reasons for extra reporting. However, extra reporting involves additional and ongoing costs to service providers. Without any changes in pricing structure, the viability of all providers is at risk.

We need sufficient quality and safety funding and policy development from government agencies.

### Introduce universal regulation

We are concerned by the NDIA's mandate for more plan-managed and self-managed services. Plan-managed and self-managed services have a low barrier to entry. We support market growth and diversification. However, these services should be regulated and compliant with the Quality and Safeguards. In turn, the safety and quality of supports to participants are at risk.

We believe there should be universal regulation across the sector.

We believe that compliance monitoring should:

- be appropriate and proportionate to the service
- consider the maturity and nature of providers.

### Dynamic pricing

NDIS pricing should be:

- dynamic
- responsive to the obligations to participants' safety.

### Share data with the sector

The commission should share information with sector stakeholders. This will help everyone follow best-practice and address areas for improvement.

## **Workforce**

### **Our aim**

The sector should have a high-quality and well-trained workforce.

Interactions between participants and NDIS staff should be positive. This is critical for shaping a participant's experience of the NDIS. This will also contribute to economic recovery.

## **What should happen next?**

### **Create alignment**

The Government should facilitate better alignment of:

- disability training
- workforce qualifications
- pay across the sector
- compliance requirements
- aged care and disability services to support staff to move between sectors.

### **Create more career pathways**

The government needs to grow the workforce across all states and territories.

The government should develop training and education pathways to:

- increase workforce supply
- address workforce retention issues.

## **Participant employment**

### **Our aim**

People with disability should be supported to be contributing members of the community.

We believe employment opportunities for people with disability are:

- critical to the success of the scheme
- a key driver for economic recovery.

### **What should happen next?**

#### **Create a strategy**

The government should provide a strategy that:

- increases workforce participation for people with disability
- sustains workforce participation for people with disability.

The strategy will align to the government's current mandate for job creation.

#### **Connect with employers**

The government should support all employers to employ people with disability.

The government should work with employers to address:

- regulatory barriers
- financial barriers
- cultural barriers
- physical barriers.

#### **Immerse in the sector**

We would encourage the government to work closely with the disability sector to:

- develop adequate training and education pathways
- create career opportunities
- achieve the objectives of the NDIS and outcomes for participants.