

# Top Ten Priorities for NDIS Reform

NDS's vision is for an inclusive Australia where all people with disability live safely and equitably. To achieve this people with disability need access to the right supports, at the right time, in the right place, from the right people, services and systems. The National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) serves as a landmark in Australia's history. The NDIS has and will transform the lives of many people with disability. It is world leading.

Any scheme as ambitious as the NDIS will face challenges in design and implementation.

To date these challenges have been met with solutions that 'tinker around the edges', that have been poorly operationalised or not implemented as intended.

This has resulted in a sector that is excited by the opportunity for foundational reform that the NDIS Review presents. But one that is also anxious about repeating the design flaws of the past and exhausted by 10 years of ongoing and constant change.

Our solution to this, to harness the excitement and promise of real change and reform, is to keep it simple. To draw on participant, provider and sector expertise and leadership to future proof the NDIS.

**Holding true to this we propose 10 Priorities for NDIS reform:**

## 1. Implementation leadership and co-design



**The issue:** After years of tinkering around the edges of the NDIS the sector has been stretched to its limits. Some fundamental changes are required. However, achieving long term improvements to the NDIS will rely on sector capacity and capability. Co-designing the implementation roadmap is critical.

**The opportunity:** Reform design and implementation should be driven by a sector led NDIS Reform Implementation Taskforce supported by funding to establish the taskforce and a Industry Transformation Fund.

## 2. Best practice pricing

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**The issue:** Viability is a major concern for the sector. Recent pricing approaches failed to recognise the increasing non staff related costs of operating. At the same time Scheme sustainability is under threat.

**The opportunity:** Adopt a best practice approach to pricing that identifies opportunities to increase value for money, ensure security and continuity of supports, incentivises quality and links to the objectives of the NDIS. This approach should be implemented by an independent pricing mechanism such as an Independent Pricing Authority.

## 3. Strategies and funding mechanisms for workforce development

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**The issue:** Attracting and retaining disability sector workers with the right values and skills remains an issue. The demand across the care and support sectors will only increase, while wages and conditions reflect the low value that the community places on these careers. Current NDIS pricing does not support investment in training, support and supervision.

**The opportunity:** Leverage work being undertaken to develop the National Care and Support Economy Strategy to co-design, fund and implement a disability workforce strategy. This strategy should consider mechanisms to fund training and worker support that is responsive to individual participant and worker needs, the provider context and the place where support is being delivered.

## 4. Regulatory reform

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**The issue:** Current market entry settings need resetting to drive quality and ensure that providers are accountable to participants, governments and the community for the supports that they are delivering. However, a significant proportion of the sector is subject to minimal oversight.

**The opportunity:** Develop a new quality and safeguarding framework that embeds minimum standards for all supports and greater oversight for supports where there is a greater risk to participant safeguarding. The new framework should be supported by pricing, payment and other measures that recognise providers who are committed and taking action to continuously improve their services.

## 5. Targeted payment measures

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**The issue:** Current pricing and payment mechanisms have resulted in a transactional approach to service delivery and are not driving quality or supporting outcomes. Incentives across all stakeholders are not aligned.

**The opportunity:** Pilot targeted, blended approaches to payment reform in those areas (for example early childhood supports) where there is greater potential for innovation and improved outcomes. Payment approaches that include performance metrics focused on service navigation and support coordination functions could be considered in the medium term.

## 6. Improved planning and support pathways

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**The issue:** Participant plans often do not meet participant needs, adequately account for complexity or use evidence of best practice supports as a basis for decision making.

**The opportunity:** Develop holistic and targeted planning and support pathways to increase decision making transparency and provide guidance to participants, planners, intermediaries and providers. These pathways should increase understanding of evidence-based and good practice and drive better information and access to services in line with participant goals, preferences, individual and Scheme outcomes.

## 7. A joined up ecosystem of support

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**The issue:** 93 per cent of disability support is funded via the NDIS, yet of the 4.4 million people with a disability in Australia, only a small proportion will receive funding support through the NDIS. Supports and services outside the NDIS do not meet the needs of many people with disability. This has resulted in inequity and the NDIS as being seen as the only option available.

**The opportunity:** Develop an intergovernmental strategy that supports seamless transitions across support systems. This strategy should clarify responsibilities and enable shared funding mechanisms so that participants and providers are not in the position of having to navigate who pays for what.

## 8. A pathway to better home and living supports

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**The issue:** NDIS participants require housing options that are affordable and accessible. Some participants also require support to live independently. Home and living supports are not meeting many participants needs: existing housing stock is ageing, non-specialist disability accommodation options are limited, and groups of participants are seeking different models of support. Providers want to work with participants to co-design responsive support models, but this takes time and resources.

**The opportunity:** Undertake a project co-designed with participants and providers to develop a 5–15-year pathway to better home and living supports. The pathway needs to address current issues, develop a strategy to manage and redevelop ageing stock and support participants explore, navigate and transition to home and living environments that meet their needs.

## 9. A focus on employment outcomes

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**The issue:** Poor employment outcomes continue for many people with disability. Employment is not prioritised in participant plans and some participants need support to identify, explore and try a range of employment options.

**The opportunity:** Work with all stakeholders to develop a cohesive vision for employment that brings together the range of existing supports available, improves how they work together, identifies gaps, develops strategies to address these gaps and supports a range of employment options for all people with disability.

## 10. A redesigned NDIS for children, young people and families

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**The issue:** The current system is not providing good outcomes for children and their families. There has been a move away from models that support children and families in ways that build their capacity. As a result, the NDIS has become the only option available.

**The opportunity:** Redesign access, planning and pricing to engage children and families early, promote best practice early childhood support and help all families know what they need and how to find it. This redesign must also provide seamless wrap-around support and integrate with critical systems such as education.



**For more information visit:** <https://www.nds.org.au/ndis-review>

