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## DNA Inc. Community Newsletter

### September at DNA Inc.

Divergent. Neuro-affirming. Authentic.



#### **A big month of change - even while we're running on a skeleton crew**

*Hello, and welcome to our September newsletter.*

This month's edition is a little different - and considerably more policy-heavy than usual - because there is a lot happening in the disability landscape right now.

The NDIS is entering one of its most significant periods of reform since the Scheme began. New legislation has passed, some changes have already commenced, others begin over the coming months and years, and ***Thriving Kids and the broader Foundational Supports system are beginning to take shape alongside them.***

If you've been trying to follow all of this and thinking “Wait... what is actually changing, when does it happen, and does any of this affect me now?” - you're not alone.

So, we've done what DNA Inc. tends to do: *gone down the policy rabbit hole so you don't have to.*

A substantial part of this month's newsletter is dedicated to breaking these reforms down into plain(er) English - including changes to NDIS access, the new definition of functional capacity, planning and reassessments, reasonable and necessary supports, social and community participation funding, plan management, provider regulation, record keeping, Thriving Kids, Foundational Supports and the eventual replacement of individually funded Support Coordination with a commissioned Support Coordination and Connection service.

### **It's a lot.**

For that reason, below you'll find a *numbered contents list* for our NDIS feature. You absolutely do not need to read all of it from beginning to end. Find the issue that matters to you and scroll straight to that numbered section.

Or read the whole thing with coffee and snacks. We won't judge. ☕🍪

Scroll to the section you want to know about:

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### **Meanwhile, behind the scenes...**

DNA Inc. is currently operating with what can best be described as a *skeleton crew*. 🦴

There isn't one dramatic reason for this. It's the cumulative reality of life: illness, disability, fluctuating capacity, children and family responsibilities, work and study, volunteer availability, the sheer amount of change happening across the NDIS and disability sector, and all the ordinary unexpected things that apparently refuse to consult our calendar before happening.

As a Neurodivergent-led grassroots organisation, we think it's important that we don't preach sustainability while quietly expecting ourselves or our volunteers to operate unsustainably.

So some things are moving more slowly.

Some timelines have shifted.

Some activities remain paused.

And some projects are continuing quietly in the background until we have the capacity to give them the attention they deserve.

### ***Slower does not mean abandoned.***

It means we're trying to practise some of the same things we advocate for: flexibility, realistic expectations, pacing, interdependence and recognising that human capacity isn't an infinite resource.

### **What's still happening?**

Our individual Body Doubling and Parallel Play sessions are still running.

These are paid sessions offered on a *sliding scale*, designed to provide flexible, low-pressure individual support for Neurodivergent people who might benefit from another person simply *being there* while they do the thing.

That might mean getting started on something you've been avoiding, doing paperwork, studying, tidying, working on a creative project, sorting life admin, tackling executive-function paralysis - or working independently alongside someone else without the pressure to constantly interact.

Sometimes support isn't someone telling you *how* to do something.

Sometimes it's having somebody there while you do it.

And sometimes parallel play means we're both doing our own thing and occasionally looking up to confirm that, yes, we remain alive and theoretically productive. 😊

### **What about the This Is Me: NeuroKind Circles?**

We know some community members are also wondering when our *This Is Me:*

*NeuroKind Circle* groups will return.

We're currently looking at which groups we can realistically restart as volunteer capacity increases.

Rather than relaunching everything at once and then discovering we don't have the people-power to sustain it, we're looking carefully at community interest, facilitation needs, accessibility and volunteer capacity before deciding which Circles will return first.

We'll share more as those plans develop.

And if volunteering, peer facilitation or helping create affirming Neurodivergent community spaces sounds like something you might be interested in, we'd still love to hear from you.

### **There are other things quietly brewing, too...**

This month we're also sharing more about *NeuroPathways: WorkLab to Employment*, our developing neuro-affirming and strengths-based approach to employment, job crafting, self-employment and sustainable work.

We're now preparing to **close the NeuroPathways community survey**, so this is the last opportunity in this round of consultation to tell us what you think is missing from existing employment supports, express interest in participating, or put your hand up to co-design, collaborate or contribute.

And because nobody should be expected to survive an entire newsletter about NDIS legislation without some form of emotional compensation, we've also included a brief visit from the *DNA Inc. Bullshit Deflector*. 🐼🛡️💥

Consider it a public service.

### **So, this September...**

There is a lot changing.

Some of it creates genuine possibilities.

Some of it raises significant questions.

Some of it isn't fully designed yet, despite understandably being discussed online as though every detail has already been decided.

And some of it is complicated enough that even people working in the disability sector are having to repeatedly check what starts **now**, what starts **later**, and what remains subject to further rules, consultation and implementation.

That's why we've made this month's NDIS feature deliberately detailed.

We want our community to be able to distinguish between:

*what has actually changed,  
what is scheduled to change,  
what government says the reforms are intended to do,  
what is still being developed,  
and what we need to keep watching as implementation unfolds.*

*You don't have to absorb all 38 sections at once.*

*Use the numbered contents above, find what matters to you, and scroll straight there.*

And outside all of that policy?

We're still here.

A little slower. A little stretched. Occasionally held together with caffeine, mutual aid, rest, and an alarming number of browser tabs.

But still building.

Still questioning.

Still creating.

Still connecting.

And still imagining what disability and Neurodivergent community can look like when *belonging isn't something we have to earn by fitting in.*

*Welcome to DNA Inc.'s September newsletter.*

*Thank you for being part of the DNA Inc. community.*

In solidarity.

*Always.*

**The Collaborators @ DNA Inc.** 🌿

💬 **Connect with us:**

Follow DNA Inc. through our social media channels for program updates, advocacy opportunities, new resources and community conversations.





# NDIS, Thriving Kids & Foundational Supports

What is changing, what we know, what we don't know yet - and what the disability community needs to watch

Australia's disability support system is entering one of its biggest periods of change since the NDIS began.

The **National Disability Insurance Scheme Amendment (Securing the NDIS for Future Generations) Act 2026** became law in August. Some provisions are already operating, while major changes to planning, eligibility, plan management, provider regulation and support coordination will be introduced progressively through to 2030.

At the same time, governments are building **Foundational Supports outside the NDIS**, beginning with **Thriving Kids from 1 October 2026**.

This means several different reforms are happening at once.

Importantly, ***not everything changes immediately***.

Current participants can continue using their existing plans and supports unless the NDIA tells them that a particular change affects them.

The bigger picture, however, is significant.

The reforms are changing:

- who the NDIS is intended to support;
- how disability and functional capacity are assessed;
- how people enter and potentially remain in the Scheme;
- how plan budgets are calculated;
- what counts as a reasonable and necessary support;
- how plans are reassessed and renewed;
- funding for some social, community and capacity-building supports;
- plan management;
- support coordination;
- provider registration and oversight;
- claiming and record-keeping requirements; and
- the relationship between the NDIS, Foundational Supports and mainstream services.

So, what actually changes - and when?

## **1. The bigger shift: the NDIS is being more tightly defined**

The Australian Government describes the reforms as returning the NDIS to its original purpose as a scheme for people with **permanent and significant disability**, while

developing other systems of support for people who have disability-related support needs but do not require the NDIS.

This distinction is central to understanding the reforms.

The NDIS is increasingly being positioned as **one part of a broader disability support ecosystem**, rather than the primary pathway through which many people obtain disability and developmental supports.

Government has identified four broad priorities:

- **reducing fraud and non-compliance**
- **slowing NDIS cost growth**
- **creating clearer eligibility requirements**
- **improving the quality of services and supports**

At the same time, Commonwealth, state and territory governments have committed to building **Foundational Supports outside the NDIS**.

This creates an important distinction:

**NDIS eligibility and disability-related need are not the same thing.**

A person can have significant disability-related needs without meeting the legal criteria for a particular government program.

Changing the boundary of the NDIS therefore does not, by itself, establish that someone's support need has disappeared.

The practical question becomes:

**What support exists on the other side of that boundary?**

## **2. A new legal definition of "functional capacity"**

One of the most significant changes is the introduction of an explicit definition of **functional capacity** into the NDIS Act.

Functional capacity has always been relevant to NDIS access, but the legislation previously did not contain a specific definition.

The new law defines a person's functional capacity in relation to an activity as their ability to undertake that activity:

- **without assistance from other people, assistive technology or modifications; OR**
- **using assistive technology or modifications that are commonly used and that the person would ordinarily use; and**
- **for a child, with assistance from other people that is appropriate for their age;**  
and:
  - **in a context that excludes, as far as possible, the impact of the person's environmental and personal circumstances.**

Further NDIS rules can prescribe the methods, criteria, classifications and thresholds used to assess this.

That final wording is important.

Earlier versions of the Bill attracted concern because functional capacity was framed as functioning without assistance. The final Act was amended so that commonly and

ordinarily used assistive technology or modifications can be considered, along with age-appropriate assistance for children.

However, the legislation still says the assessment should exclude, "as far as possible," environmental and personal circumstances.

That creates an important distinction between someone's assessed capacity and what they actually manage to do in their everyday environment.

### **3. Why the functional-capacity definition matters**

Disability does not always operate consistently across environments.

A person's functioning may change depending on:

- sensory demands;
- communication accessibility;
- predictability;
- executive-function demands;
- physical accessibility;
- available informal support;
- social expectations;
- fatigue;
- stress;
- competing demands; or
- the accessibility of the environment itself.

This can be particularly relevant for people with fluctuating, psychosocial, cognitive and neurodevelopmental disabilities.

For example, an autistic person may technically possess the capacity to complete an activity in controlled circumstances while requiring considerable support to perform it consistently, safely or sustainably in everyday life.

Similarly, appearing able to complete an activity does not necessarily show the effort, distress, recovery time or support structures making that performance possible.

The legislation therefore makes the eventual assessment methodology and thresholds extremely important.

A Technical Advisory Group has been established to advise government on how "substantially reduced functional capacity" should be assessed.

The detailed assessment framework is still being developed.

### **4. Functional capacity will affect ACCESS - but a different assessment will determine PLAN BUDGETS**

This distinction is easy to miss.

From **1 January 2028**, NDIS access will progressively move to a **standardised, evidence-based functional capacity assessment**.

For existing participants, reassessment against the new access arrangements will occur progressively over approximately three years.

But the **support needs assessment** used under new framework planning is a different process.

From **1 April 2027**, participants will progressively move to new framework planning.

The support needs assessment will consider matters including:

- functional capacity;
- life stage;
- disability-related support needs; and
- relevant environmental factors.

Its purpose is to help determine a participant's plan budget.

Government says the support needs assessment used for planning will **not itself determine whether someone is eligible for the NDIS**.

So there will effectively be two related but different questions:

**ACCESS:** Does the person meet the NDIS eligibility threshold?

**PLANNING:** If they do, what disability-related support needs should their NDIS budget address?

That distinction will become increasingly important from 2027-28.

## **5. Diagnosis will become less central to NDIS access**

From January 2028, access will increasingly focus on the effect of impairment on functional capacity rather than relying on diagnosis lists as a pathway into the Scheme.

A diagnosis may remain important evidence.

But diagnosis alone will not determine eligibility.

This means two people with the same diagnosis may receive different access decisions depending on their assessed functional capacity.

Conversely, the intention is that eligibility should focus on the functional impact of disability rather than simply the diagnostic label attached to it.

The details of the new eligibility assessment process and thresholds remain important areas of implementation.

## **6. "Permanent disability" is also being more tightly defined**

The reforms also change how permanence is assessed.

Under the new provisions, an impairment will not be considered permanent or likely to be permanent unless:

- the person has undertaken all "appropriate treatment", where appropriate treatment exists; and
- the impairment is likely to persist for the person's lifetime.

The legislation defines appropriate treatment as treatment that is evidence-based and can reliably be expected to materially improve, reverse or alleviate the impact of the impairment.

The Act also recognises that a person may continue to require treatment to ***maintain functional capacity*** even though their impairment is permanent.

Further rules will deal with circumstances in which someone is considered to have undertaken all appropriate treatment.

This will be another area to watch carefully as the new access arrangements are implemented.

## **7. Other compensation and support systems will matter more**

Eligibility rules are also being strengthened around access to other compensation schemes.

Applicants may need to disclose whether they are eligible for or receiving support through systems such as:

- workers' compensation; or
- motor vehicle accident compensation schemes for the relevant impairment.

This reflects the broader reform principle that the NDIS should not automatically fund supports that another system is responsible for providing.

That principle also appears throughout the changes to reasonable and necessary supports.

## **8. Reasonable and necessary supports are changing**

From **1 February 2027**, new criteria will begin applying when the NDIA decides what supports are reasonable and necessary for new participants.

They will then progressively apply to existing participants when their plans are reassessed.

The NDIA will be required to consider matters including Scheme sustainability and equity between participants with similar needs and circumstances.

There will also be clearer guidance about what parents would ordinarily be expected to provide for a child, including areas such as:

- supervision;
- personal care;
- transport;
- emotional support; and
- behavioural support.

Importantly, this does **not** include additional support required because of the child's disability compared with a child of a similar age without disability.

How that boundary is interpreted in practice will matter considerably for families.

## **9. Supports will need to be more directly linked to the impairment through which a person accesses the NDIS**

Another change strengthens the connection between an eligible impairment and funded support.

The legislation now refers to support needs arising directly from an impairment or impairments for which the participant meets the relevant NDIS access requirements.

This could become important for people with multiple disabilities, interacting conditions or complex support needs.

The practical effect will depend on how the provision is interpreted and implemented through planning decisions.

## **10. Plan reassessments have already changed**

Changes to participant-requested reassessments are already operating.

Only the:

- participant;
- plan nominee; or
- child representative

can request this type of reassessment before the scheduled reassessment date.

A reassessment can still be requested where there has been a significant and ongoing change in support needs arising from changes in functional capacity or significant and ongoing changes to areas such as:

- living arrangements;
- education;
- employment; or
- informal support networks.

The NDIA has **90 days to decide whether to conduct the reassessment** after receiving the request.

Participants can still request **plan variations** for smaller, urgent or short-term changes.

This 90-day rule should not be confused with the separate 90-day claiming rule commencing in December.

## **11. Some social, community and capacity-building budgets will begin reducing from October**

From **1 October 2026**, reductions begin for some budgets within:

**Social, Economic and Community Participation**

and

**Improved Daily Living Skills.**

These reductions do **not** mean every participant receives an automatic cut on 1 October.

They will be progressively applied when:

- a new plan is approved;
- a plan is reassessed from 1 October 2026; or
- a plan is renewed from February 2027.

The NDIA says the effect will differ between participants because plans continue to reflect individual circumstances and support needs.

Some supports within these broader categories are excluded, including:

- employment supports;
- disability-related health supports;
- high-intensity supports; and
- intensive and complex behaviour supports.

The changes are not retrospective.

## **12. Extra protection for people requiring continuous 24-hour disability support**

From **1 October 2026**, a new plan-variation pathway will be available for participants with high support needs who require continuous 24-hour disability-related care. Where a support determination affects their funding, eligible participants will be able to seek a plan variation within 90 days.

The NDIA can increase funding where necessary to ensure essential 24-hour disability supports continue.

Separate consultation is also occurring about possible future commissioning arrangements for Supported Independent Living.

### **13. Plan rollovers are ending**

From **1 February 2027**, the existing plan-continuation or "rollover" process will be replaced by **plan renewals**.

When a plan reaches its scheduled reassessment date, either:

- the plan will be reassessed; or
- a renewed plan will be created with the relevant supports.

A major change is that:

**unspent funding from the previous plan will not carry into the renewed plan.**

Participants should therefore not assume unused funding will remain available after the plan ends.

This does not mean people should spend funding unnecessarily. NDIS funds must still only be used for eligible supports in accordance with the plan and NDIS rules.

### **14. New framework planning begins in April 2027**

From **1 April 2027**, participants will progressively begin moving into **new framework plans**.

A support needs assessment will inform the budget.

The new system is intended to create more consistent planning and budgeting across participants with similar needs.

Rules can specify:

- how support needs assessments are conducted;
- who conducts them;
- what information can be considered;
- what information must be considered; and
- what information must not be considered.

The transition is expected to occur progressively rather than everyone changing on the same date.

The current government timeline indicates transition to new framework planning is expected to be completed by the end of 2030.

### **15. Plan management is changing**

From **1 October 2027**, the NDIA will establish a panel of approved plan management providers.

Participants who use plan management will need to choose a provider from the approved panel.

If their existing plan manager is not on the panel, they will have a **six-month transition period** to move to an approved provider.

The reforms also strengthen separation between plan management and the provision of other NDIS supports, intended to address conflicts of interest.

This represents a shift away from the current open plan-management market toward a commissioned panel.

## **16. Support coordination as we know it is ending**

This is one of the biggest structural changes and deserves much more attention.

From **1 July 2028**, the current model of participants receiving funding in their individual NDIS plans to purchase support coordination will be replaced.

The Government intends to establish a new **commissioned support coordination and connection service**.

Under the proposed model:

**participants will no longer purchase support coordination from funding allocated within their individual NDIS plan.**

Instead, the NDIA will directly fund selected organisations to provide support coordination and connection services.

Providers will apply through a merit-based process and successful organisations will be commissioned to deliver the service.

Participants are expected to choose from the commissioned providers available to them.

The Government is currently consulting on the design of this model.

This is therefore not simply a change in the name of Support Coordination.

It changes **who holds the funding and how the service market operates**.

Under the existing model:

**participant → receives NDIS funding → chooses/purchases support coordination**

Under the future commissioned model:

**NDIA → commissions selected providers → participant accesses a provider within that system**

The stated objectives include greater consistency, quality and efficiency and stronger connection with mainstream and community services.

But several practical details remain important, including:

- how much choice participants will have between commissioned providers;
- how conflicts of interest will be managed;
- what happens in regional, rural and thin markets;
- whether participants can change providers easily;
- how specialist support coordination and complex cases will be handled;
- how culturally specific and disability-specific expertise will be retained;
- what independence from the NDIA and other service providers will look like;

- how advocacy will remain distinct from support coordination;
- what happens when a participant disagrees with the support coordinator;
- how continuity of existing relationships will be managed; and
- what accountability and complaints mechanisms will apply.

The transition is scheduled for **1 July 2028**, so current support coordination does not disappear now.

Participants should continue using their existing support coordination funding in accordance with their current plan unless advised otherwise.

## **17. Provider registration is expanding**

From **1 July 2027**, mandatory registration will begin expanding for providers delivering specified higher-risk supports.

This includes areas such as:

- personal care;
- daily living supports; and
- supports delivered in closed settings.

Implementation will occur progressively through to the end of 2030.

Participants receiving those higher-risk supports will eventually need to use registered providers for them.

Choice of unregistered providers will remain for other lower-risk supports where registration is not mandatory.

## **18. Provider enrolment and oversight are also increasing**

Provider registration is not the only change.

Government is also developing broader **provider enrolment** arrangements so the NDIA can identify and monitor businesses receiving NDIS payments.

Enrolment and registration are different mechanisms.

The reforms also strengthen:

- information-gathering powers;
- investigation and enforcement powers;
- civil penalties;
- fraud controls;
- payment evidence requirements; and
- monitoring of suspicious activity.

New offences also cover conduct including deliberately providing false or misleading information, obtaining NDIS funds through deception, abuse of a nominee position and intentional destruction of relevant records.

## **19. Kickbacks and inducements will be banned**

From **27 November 2026**, new restrictions on providers offering kickbacks and inducements are scheduled to commence.

This is part of broader reforms addressing conflicts of interest and financial incentives within NDIS markets.

The aim is to prevent participant choice being influenced by inappropriate financial arrangements between providers or other parties.

## **20. New record-keeping responsibilities**

Record-keeping requirements are being strengthened.

The required retention periods are:

**Participants - 3 years**

**Nominees - 5 years**

**Providers - 7 years**

Participants may be asked to demonstrate that NDIS funding was used appropriately.

Failure to retain required evidence can have financial consequences, including circumstances in which an amount may become a debt to the NDIA.

Participants should therefore retain invoices, receipts and other appropriate evidence relating to the use of their NDIS funds.

## **21. The 90-day claiming rule**

From **December 2026**, claims generally need to be submitted within **90 days of the support being delivered**.

This is completely separate from the 90-day period associated with requests for unscheduled plan reassessment.

In simple terms:

**90 days for reassessment:** the NDIA has up to 90 days to decide whether to reassess after receiving an eligible request.

**90 days for claims:** claims need to be lodged within 90 days after the support was delivered.

Participants, providers and plan managers should avoid confusing the two.

## **22. Plans may be suspended if information requests are repeatedly unanswered**

The reforms expand circumstances in which the NDIA can suspend a participant's plan.

This can occur where the NDIA requires information and the participant does not respond adequately after reasonable attempts at contact.

The NDIA describes reasonable attempts as attempting to contact the participant, nominee or authorised representative at least **five times over an extended period**.

The legislation also provides circumstances in which participant status can eventually be revoked after a plan has remained suspended for at least 90 days and contact cannot be established.

Keeping contact details current and responding to formal NDIA information requests will therefore become particularly important.

## **23. Some NDIS administration can now be automated**

The legislation permits computer systems to automate specified administrative actions, including aspects of:

- claims processing; and
- payment processing.

Government states that safeguards and oversight will apply and that complex or discretionary decisions requiring judgement — such as planning decisions — will continue to involve people.

The NDIA must also publish information about where automated systems are being used.

This is an area where transparency will remain important as implementation expands.

## **24. NDIS pricing decisions are changing**

The Minister for Disability and the NDIS now has power to make pricing determinations setting maximum amounts for NDIS supports.

The NDIA will continue undertaking analysis and consultation through the Annual Pricing Review and provide advice to the Minister.

This does not mean all NDIS prices changed when the legislation passed.

It changes who ultimately holds the pricing decision-making power.

## **25. Thriving Kids begins rolling out from October 2026**

At the same time as the NDIS changes, governments are beginning to build a different support system outside it.

**Thriving Kids is the first major phase of Foundational Supports.**

Its phased rollout begins on **1 October 2026**.

It is intended to support children aged **eight and under** who need additional developmental assistance, particularly children with developmental delay and/or autism with low-to-moderate support needs, along with their families, carers and kin.

The model is intended to include supports such as:

- developmental and health checks;
- family and parenting support;
- navigation;
- targeted developmental supports;
- connection with local services; and
- workforce and community capacity building.

The intention is to identify needs earlier and make support available outside an individual NDIS package.

## **26. Thriving Kids does NOT mean every autistic child leaves the NDIS in October**

This distinction is essential.

The rollout begins in October 2026, but the NDIS access changes do not all commence then.

From **1 January 2028**, new NDIS access arrangements begin.

Children aged eight and under with developmental delay and/or autism and **low-to-moderate support needs** are intended to receive support through Thriving Kids rather than entering the NDIS.

Children with permanent and significant disability — including children with developmental delay and/or autism who have substantially reduced functional capacity/high support needs — may continue to meet NDIS eligibility requirements.

Existing participants are not all removed from the NDIS on 1 October.

Changes will occur progressively and according to the applicable eligibility and reassessment arrangements.

## **27. What happens after age eight?**

This remains an important system-design question.

Developmental and disability-related support needs do not necessarily decline as children become older.

For some neurodivergent children, needs can become more apparent or more complex during later childhood and adolescence as:

- academic demands increase;
- executive-function demands increase;
- peer relationships become more complex;
- environments become less flexible;
- sensory and social expectations increase;
- puberty occurs;
- mental-health pressures emerge;
- independence expectations increase; and
- transition to further education and employment approaches.

Foundational Supports therefore need pathways extending beyond early childhood. The broader Foundational Supports system — rather than Thriving Kids alone — will be important for children and young people who are over eight, do not meet NDIS eligibility requirements and nevertheless require disability-related support. The precise architecture of those longer-term targeted supports is still developing.

## **28. What are Foundational Supports?**

Foundational Supports are disability supports delivered **outside the NDIS**. Commonwealth, state and territory governments have agreed to **\$10 billion in joint funding over five years**.

They are intended to include both **general** and **targeted** supports.

General Foundational Supports may include:

- accessible evidence-based information;
- peer support;
- assistance building skills and independence;
- community connection;
- navigation; and
- helping community organisations become more inclusive.

Targeted Foundational Supports are intended for people who have additional disability-related support needs but do not require the level of individualised support provided through the NDIS.

Thriving Kids is the first major phase.

## **29. Foundational Supports are not the same as the NDIS**

This is an important distinction.

The NDIS generally provides an eligible participant with an **individualised plan and funding** with which supports can be purchased.

Foundational Supports may instead be delivered through:

- community organisations;
- mainstream services;
- commissioned programs;
- group-based programs;
- navigation;
- information;
- targeted services; or
- other locally delivered supports.

Therefore, saying that someone will be supported outside the NDIS does not necessarily mean they will receive an equivalent individual budget.

The relevant questions become:

**What support actually exists?**

**Can the person access it?**

**Is it adequate for their needs?**

**And what happens if it isn't?**

## **30. Foundational Supports should represent additional capacity**

One issue to watch is **additionality**.

If people are expected to rely more heavily on health, education and community systems, those systems need sufficient capacity to provide the support.

A referral to an existing service is not necessarily equivalent to receiving support.

For example:

- a long public waiting list;
- a service unavailable outside metropolitan areas;
- an inaccessible mainstream program;
- a school without adequate specialist resources; or
- a service that cannot meet the person's communication or disability needs

may technically represent a service pathway without providing meaningful support.

This will be particularly important in regional, rural and remote communities and other existing thin markets.

### **31. Schools cannot simply become the replacement disability system**

Education systems already have responsibilities toward students with disability.

But Foundational Supports cannot simply mean transferring functions previously purchased through the NDIS onto classroom teachers and families without additional resources.

If mainstream systems are expected to carry greater responsibility, the relevant questions include whether they have:

- appropriate funding;
- specialist expertise;
- workforce capacity;
- accessible environments;
- neuro-affirming practice;
- interprofessional support;
- clear responsibility boundaries; and
- accountability when support is unavailable.

**Mainstream responsibility requires mainstream capacity.**

### **32. Support does not always mean therapy**

The development of Foundational Supports also creates an opportunity to think more broadly about what effective disability support looks like.

Support may include:

- allied health;
- communication support and AAC;
- assistive technology;
- environmental modification;
- individual assistance;
- peer support;
- mentoring;
- family support;
- inclusive recreation;
- community participation;
- accessible education;
- employment support;
- navigation;
- self-advocacy; or
- changing an inaccessible environment.

For neurodivergent people particularly, successful support should not automatically be measured by increased compliance, appearing less disabled or becoming more "typical".

Measures such as participation, communication, autonomy, safety, relationships, wellbeing and quality of life are also important.

### **33. The disability-support market itself is changing**

The reforms are not only about participants.

They represent a broader restructuring of the NDIS market.

Over the next several years Australia will see increasing use of:

- provider registration;
- provider enrolment;
- commissioned provider panels;
- tighter payment controls;
- ministerial pricing;
- stronger record requirements;
- restrictions on conflicts of interest;
- automated administration;
- commissioned plan management;
- commissioned support coordination; and potentially
- different commissioning arrangements in parts of home and living support.

This means the NDIS is gradually moving away from an entirely open-market model in some areas.

The effect on participant choice, service quality, market diversity, small providers and thin markets will need to be monitored as implementation proceeds.

### **34. The Inclusive Communities Fund**

Alongside these reforms, the Government has announced a **\$200 million Inclusive Communities Fund**.

Its purpose is to build the capacity of community organisations to provide genuinely inclusive participation opportunities.

This is particularly relevant because social and community participation is one of the areas in which NDIS budgets are being reset.

The important implementation question will be whether inclusive community capacity develops sufficiently to provide meaningful opportunities for people who currently rely on individually funded support to participate.

### **35. What is confirmed - and what is still being designed?**

This is perhaps the most important distinction for the community right now.

Already legislated or commencing

The 2026 Act has created the legal framework for major changes including:

- the new definition of functional capacity;
- tighter unscheduled reassessment requirements;
- stronger links between funded supports and eligible impairments;
- support determinations;
- plan renewals;
- changes to reasonable and necessary criteria;
- permanence and appropriate-treatment requirements;
- stronger compliance powers;
- shorter claiming timeframes;
- record-keeping requirements;

- provider reforms;
- plan-management reform;
- pricing changes; and
- automated administrative action.

### *Still being designed or implemented*

Important operational details remain under development, including aspects of:

- the functional-capacity assessment and thresholds;
- the new eligibility assessment;
- new framework planning rules;
- support needs assessments;
- the commissioned support coordination and connection model;
- Foundational Supports beyond Thriving Kids;
- commissioning arrangements for some home and living supports;
- provider-market reforms;
- differentiated pricing for some unregistered providers; and
- how some reforms will work in practice across different communities.

So it is important not to treat every announced reform as though its final operational model is already known.

## **36. The three tests worth applying as the reforms roll out**

Rather than reducing the discussion to whether support comes from the **NDIS** or **Foundational Supports**, there are three practical questions that can be asked of either system.

Availability

Does the support actually exist where the person lives?

Adequacy

Does it meet the person's actual disability-related needs?

Accountability

What happens when it doesn't?

These questions apply equally to NDIS supports, Thriving Kids, Foundational Supports and mainstream services.

## **37. What should participants and families do right now?**

For most existing participants:

**There is no need to stop using your current supports because future reforms have been announced.**

Continue using your current NDIS plan according to your approved funding and current NDIS rules unless the NDIA advises you that a change applies to you.

It is also increasingly important to:

- keep invoices, receipts and support records;
- keep NDIA contact details current;
- respond to formal information requests;
- retain evidence about functional capacity and disability-related support needs;
- document significant changes in circumstances;

- understand when your current plan ends;
- distinguish a plan variation from a reassessment;
- watch for information about transition to new framework planning; and
- check information against official sources rather than assuming that a headline about "NDIS cuts" or "new eligibility" applies immediately to every participant.

### 38. The bigger question

The reforms create the possibility of a disability-support system in which the NDIS is no longer expected to do everything.

That could mean stronger community inclusion, earlier developmental support, better mainstream accessibility and less pressure on families to obtain individual NDIS packages simply to receive assistance.

It also creates a risk if individualised supports are reduced or eligibility narrowed **before adequate alternatives exist outside the Scheme.**

That is why participant numbers or NDIS expenditure alone cannot tell us whether reform has worked.

Over time, the relevant outcomes will include whether:

- disabled people can actually access support;
- children and families receive help early;
- people have greater autonomy and participation;
- mainstream systems become more accessible;
- regional communities receive real services rather than theoretical pathways;
- people who no longer receive NDIS support are adequately supported elsewhere;
- support gaps decrease rather than move between systems; and
- people have somewhere to go when the new arrangements do not meet their needs.

The question is therefore bigger than:

**"Is this person supported by the NDIS?"**

It is:

**"Does this person have access to adequate support to live, communicate, participate, exercise autonomy and belong - and who is accountable when they don't?"**



# What We're Watching

Not every part of the NDIS reforms is settled yet. Some changes are legislated, while important details are still being designed, consulted on or implemented.

DNA Inc. will be watching:

- **Functional capacity assessments** - how the new definition is translated into assessment methods, criteria and thresholds in practice.
- **Foundational Supports beyond age eight** - particularly what targeted supports will actually exist for children and young people aged 9+ who have disability-related needs but are not eligible for the NDIS.
- **Support Coordination and Connection** - how the new commissioned model will work from 2028, including participant choice, independence, continuity, conflicts of interest and access in thin markets.
- **Regional access** - whether Thriving Kids and other Foundational Supports are genuinely available outside metropolitan areas, rather than simply existing as policy or referral pathways.
- **Mainstream capacity** - whether health, education and community systems receive **actual additional funding, workforce and expertise** to take on greater responsibility for disability support.

Why this matters to us: **an announced program is not yet an available service, a referral pathway is not necessarily support, and consultation is not a final policy design.**

As implementation continues, we'll keep separating **what has been decided, what has commenced, what is proposed, and what we still don't know.**

## **“What does this mean for me right now?”**

*If you're a current participant, don't panic or change supports because you've seen a headline. Most reforms are staged. Keep using your current plan unless the NDIA tells you a change applies to you; keep records; note your plan dates; and seek individual advice where needed.*

## ***Important information***

*The NDIS reforms are being implemented progressively and several important rules, assessment methods and service models are still being developed.*

*This information is current as at **18 September 2026** and is intended as general community information, not individual legal, financial or NDIS planning advice. Because implementation details will continue to change, participants and families should check current information from the NDIA and Australian Government when making decisions about their individual circumstances.*



# DNA Inc. - Bullshit Deflector: ACTIVATED

Okay. We've done a lot of serious NDIS policy talk.

*Time for a brief intermission.*

You know that moment when you've reached your daily limit for nonsense?  
The spin. The jargon. The excuses. The performative concern. The “*trust us, this is for  
your own good*” energy.

Your internal alarm starts going off:

 **BULLSHIT DETECTED.**   
 **DEPLOY DEFLECTOR.** 

Because sometimes the answer isn't another carefully researched 2,000-word explanation with seventeen references and a parliamentary submission attached.

Sometimes it's:

*Nope!*

You don't have to engage with every piece of nonsense that wanders into your day.

You don't have to explain yourself to everyone.

You don't have to attend every argument you're invited to.

And you definitely don't have to sacrifice three hours of your life constructing the  
*perfect response* for someone who wasn't listening in the first place.

Sometimes protecting your energy is the productive thing.

*Deflect the bullshit.*

*Protect your energy.*

*Pick your battles.*

  *Deploy raccoon or possum mode as required.*  

And if the deflector experiences a temporary systems failure...

Have you tried turning it off and on again?

Failing that, there's always coffee.

*We now return you to your regularly scheduled newsletter.* 😊



## What DNA Inc. is working on - Last chance to have your say

DNA Inc. is continuing the development of **NeuroPathways: WorkLab to Employment** - a neuro-affirming, strengths-based program exploring work, job crafting, self-employment, workplace navigation and sustainable employment pathways for Neurodivergent people.

As we move into the next stage of development, *we are now preparing to close our community survey and expressions of interest.*

So, if you have been meaning to have your say, share an idea, tell us what is missing from existing employment supports, or put your hand up to be involved, this is your last chance to contribute before the survey closes.

This project is a passion project of DNA Inc. CEO Bee Austin, a psychosocial recovery coach and soon-to-be rehabilitation counsellor, developed from both lived and professional experience of navigating the gaps many Neurodivergent people encounter in traditional employment and employment-support systems.

The program is being built around a simple but important idea:

*We don't "fix" people to fit jobs. We shape work to fit people.*

NeuroPathways is exploring more sustainable, ethical, culturally safe and neuro-affirming approaches to employment, including:

- **Job crafting** - shaping roles around strengths, needs and ways of working
  - **Self-employment and micro-enterprise**
  - **Energy-aligned and sustainable work**
- **Workplace navigation, accommodations and advocacy**
  - **Strengths-based approaches** - to work, identity, and participation

Importantly, we don't want to design this *for* the Neurodivergent community without designing it with the Neurodivergent community.

Before we close this stage of consultation, we especially want to hear from Neurodivergent community members who might participate; practitioners, peer workers, educators or employers who have knowledge to contribute; people interested in co-designing or helping deliver elements of the program; and organisations or businesses that may be able to contribute in-kind support, materials, space, mentoring, work opportunities or collaboration.

*You do not need to have all the answers or make a commitment to be involved.*

At this stage, we want to understand what people actually need, what isn't working in existing employment systems, what possibilities the community would like us to explore, and who might want to be part of what comes next.

### **Last chance to contribute**

We will be closing the NeuroPathways survey and current expressions of interest at the end of September so we can bring together what we have heard and move into the next phase of development.

If you have been meaning to complete the survey, *now is the time.*

If you are interested in participating, co-designing, collaborating, mentoring, contributing professional or lived-experience

knowledge, or otherwise being involved, *we would love to hear from you before this consultation closes.*

*Another world of work is possible.  
We are trying to build it together - with the people it is intended to serve.*

Email **DNA Inc.** to get in touch or register your interest, or complete the relevant form or survey via the link below.

[Advisory Committee EOI Form](#)

[Community Co-Design Survey](#)



## Help Keep DNA Inc. Growing



## Supporting Divergent Futures Studio

### Building a social enterprise with purpose

One of the projects taking shape behind the scenes at DNA Inc. is ***Divergent Futures Studio*** - our emerging Neurodivergent-led social enterprise.

The idea is simple: create products, resources and creative initiatives that celebrate ***Neurodivergent identity, disability pride, creativity and community***, while generating sustainable income that can be reinvested into the work of DNA Inc. and future community projects.

For a small grassroots organisation, sustainability matters. Grants and donations can make important work possible, but they can also be short-term, competitive and unpredictable. Divergent Futures Studio is about developing another pathway — one that allows us to generate income while creating things that reflect the communities we are part of.

Importantly, this isn't about turning community into a commodity.

It's about asking:

*Can social enterprise help us resource community work without losing the values that made the work important in the first place?*

That's what we're hoping to build.

### **What's coming?**

Over time, we're planning a growing mix of products, resources and creative projects, including:

- thoughtfully curated **sensory boxes and sensory resources**
  - **metal pin badges** featuring fun, affirming and advocacy-focused designs  
creative merchandise
  - Neurodivergent-led **community and educational resources**
    - raffles and fundraising activities
    - collaborations with community members and creatives
- and, as always, probably a few ideas we haven't thought of yet.

We want the Studio to evolve rather than arrive fully formed - with room for experimentation, collaboration and ideas from the community.

### **Our fundraiser is still coming - just a little later than planned**

We had originally hoped to launch our online fundraiser sooner, but we've needed to push that timeline back because of capacity.

That's the reality of grassroots work sometimes.

Rather than rushing the launch, we're giving ourselves the time needed to build the foundations properly.

The fundraiser will help cover some of the practical costs involved in establishing Divergent Futures Studio, including administration and expanding our existing website so the Studio can have a proper online home.

Whether you eventually purchase something from the Studio, enter a raffle, contribute to the fundraiser, collaborate with us or simply share what we're doing, *every bit of support helps us move closer to something sustainable.*

### **Why sustainability matters**

DNA Inc. remains a grassroots, Neurodivergent-led organisation working to create affirming spaces, resources, advocacy and opportunities with and alongside disabled and Neurodivergent people.

Like many grassroots organisations, much of that work happens where nobody sees it.

It's the emails.

The research.

The advocacy.

The planning.

The administration.

The conversations with community members.

The resources that take hours to develop.

The projects that never quite fit neatly into a grant application.

The emotional and relational labour.  
And the countless hours required simply to keep a small community organisation  
moving.

Small organisations are often asked to hold extraordinary amounts of community need  
with very little structural support.

We continue because community matters.

And because we believe the work matters.

But sustainable community care also requires sustainable community infrastructure.

Divergent Futures Studio is one way we're trying to build some of that infrastructure  
ourselves.

### **There are lots of ways to support the work**

Financial support helps, but community support isn't limited to money. You can support  
DNA Inc. and Divergent Futures Studio by attending our activities, sharing our work,  
becoming a member, partnering or collaborating with us, offering mutual aid or in-kind  
support, sponsoring accessible community initiatives, supporting our fundraisers when  
they launch, or helping amplify *Neurodivergent-led ideas, projects and innovation*.

And, when Divergent Futures Studio opens its virtual doors, you can buy something  
delightfully divergent while helping fund the work behind it.

That's a pretty good transaction.

### **Building something different**

Divergent Futures Studio is still taking shape.

We don't know exactly what every part of it will eventually look like - and that's okay.

What we do know is what we want it to be grounded in:

**Neurodivergent leadership.**

**Disability pride.**

**Creativity.**

**Accessibility.**

**Community.**

**Fairness.**

**Sustainability.**

We are not interested only in helping Neurodivergent and disabled people find better  
ways to fit into systems that were never designed with us in mind.

We are also interested in what happens when we have the space and resources to *create*  
*alternatives of our own*.

Different ways of working.

Different ways of creating.

Different ways of contributing.

And different ways of belonging.

***Because belonging and inclusion should never depend on profitability.***

**Thank you for continuing to walk alongside us while we build what comes next.**

[Donate](#)[Become a Member](#)

## Member Spotlight

### *Supporting Local, Supporting Community*

One of the strengths of DNA Inc. is our network of values-aligned members who are committed to providing high-quality, person-centred support across our region. If you're looking for trusted professionals to help navigate the NDIS or provide everyday supports, we'd encourage you to check out these local organisations.

### **Nurture Learning Support Ambition (NLSA)**



NLSA is a dedicated team providing **Support Coordination** and **Psychosocial Recovery Coaching** with a strong focus on empowerment, autonomy and genuine choice. Rather than expecting people to fit systems, NLSA works alongside participants to understand their goals, navigate the NDIS with confidence, and build supports that reflect the person's own values and aspirations. Their warm, relationship-based approach helps people feel informed, connected and in control of their journey. NLSA supports participants across Central Queensland, South East Queensland and remotely throughout Australia.

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## JRCP Support Services



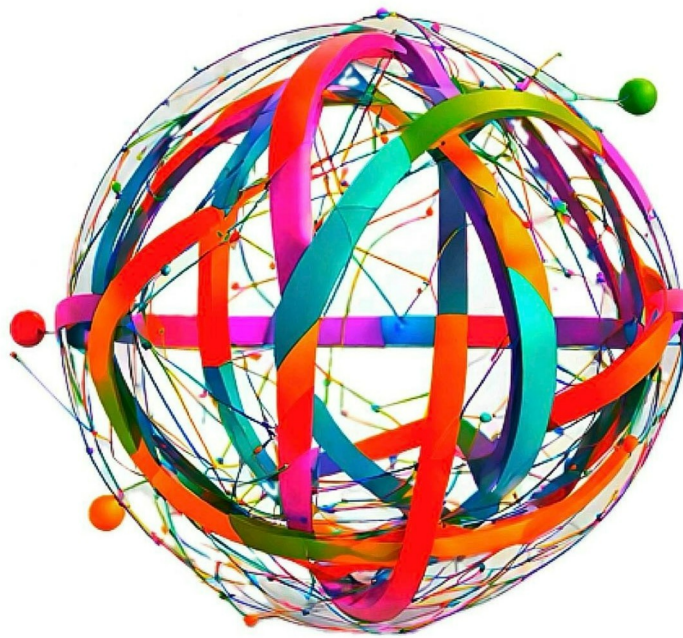
JRCP Support Services is a family-owned, NDIS-registered provider delivering personalised disability support throughout the Gladstone region. Built on both professional expertise and lived experience, JRCP believes the best support starts with listening. Their team offers flexible, reliable assistance tailored to each person's goals, routines and preferences, whether that's support with daily living, community participation or building independence. With relationships, dignity and consistency at the heart of everything they do, JRCP is committed to providing "Just Right Care" that puts people before paperwork.

*We are proud to have organisations like NLSA and JRCP Support Services as part of the DNA Inc. community. If you're looking for quality, person-centred support, we encourage you to connect with them and explore how they may be able to assist you or someone you care about.*



## ***This Is Me: NeuroKind Circles***

### ***Neurodivergent-Led & Supported Sessions***



### **Skeleton Crew Update**

A reminder that reduced capacity means we're deliberately prioritising what we can sustain. Some groups, projects and timelines remain paused or slower than we'd originally hoped.

We're not going to manufacture urgency, overpromise, or burn out volunteers to make a grassroots organisation *look* more productive.

**Capacity is information, not a moral failing.**

We'll restart and expand activities when we have the people, resources and capacity to do them well.

## **This Is Me: NeuroKind Circles**

***Still want to connect? You can!***

While our regular *This Is Me: NeuroKind Circles* program is taking a short pause, we haven't closed the door on connection.

## **Individual NeuroKind Circle Bookings**

If you'd like to participate in a *This Is Me: NeuroKind Circle* on an individual basis, we can still offer individual bookings during the pause. These provide a more flexible, lower-pressure way to connect, explore creativity and engage with NeuroKind Circle activities at your own pace.

### ***Body Doubling***

Need someone alongside you while you tackle the thing?

Our Body Doubling sessions provide shared space and gentle accountability without requiring you to work with someone.

Bring the task you've been avoiding, the project you've been meaning to start, study, admin, creative work or absolutely anything else that benefits from another person being there.

### ***Parallel Play***

You don't have to be doing the same thing to be doing something together. Parallel Play provides space to spend time alongside others while each person does their own thing. *Read. Draw. Create. Game. Work. Study. Craft. Stim. Fidget. Organise. Rest. Or simply exist in the same space.*

There is no requirement to perform socialising.

No pressure to fill every silence.

No expectation that connection has to look a particular way.

Different ways of connecting. Same principle.

You don't have to change how you connect to belong here.

These gentle, low-pressure online creative and interest-based sessions are designed for Neurodivergent people, with a focus on connection, autonomy, sensory consideration, and community without obligation.

For information about individual bookings, Body Doubling and Parallel Play sessions, including costs and upcoming availability, contact DNA Inc. or follow our social media for session announcements.

## DNA Inc. Body Doubling Sessions -2026

These sessions are Neurodivergent-led & supported and flexible.  
Come as you are.  
Find motivation & company whilst tackling your tasks.



Email GRANN at: [divergentnexusaus@gmail.com](mailto:divergentnexusaus@gmail.com)  
Visit: <http://www.divergentnexusaus.com.au>

## DNA Inc. Parallel Play Sessions -2026

These sessions are Neurodivergent-led & supported, flexible, and low-demand.  
Come as you are.  
Find comfort in company whilst enjoying your interests.



Email GRANN at: [divergentnexusaus@gmail.com](mailto:divergentnexusaus@gmail.com)  
Visit: <http://www.divergentnexusaus.com.au>

## Neurodivergent-led Organisations, Supports, & Resources



[Supports Signpost](#)

[DNA Inc. Resources](#)

*Want to Get Involved?  
Volunteer with DNA Inc.*

DNA Inc. is powered by community - and we're always grateful for kind, creative, Neurodivergent-led hands to help shape what we do. Whether you're looking to contribute your time, skills, ideas, or presence, we'd love to hear from you.

***Volunteering with DNA Inc. can look like:***

- 💻 Helping behind the scenes with admin or website content
- 🎨 Co-creating accessible resources or artwork
- 📢 Supporting events, workshops, or advocacy campaigns
- 🧸 Offering lived experience wisdom or gentle peer support

**Lived experience needed and a willingness to show up in your own way.**

**Flexible, affirming, and low-demand roles available.  
We'll always work with your access needs and capacity.**

Register below or visit our website  
[www.http://www.divergentnexusaus.com.au](http://www.divergentnexusaus.com.au)  
and click "Volunteer" in the menu

You can also ✉ Email us at: [divergentnexusaus@gmail.com](mailto:divergentnexusaus@gmail.com)

🌈 Thank you for helping us build something meaningful and proudly Neurodivergent led.

📝 **Register your interest to volunteer here:**

**Volunteer EOI Form**

## ***Your Views Matters We'd Love Your Feedback***

✨ **Share what's working. Tell us what's not. Suggest something new.**

At DNA Inc., everything we do is shaped by *you*, our community. Your experiences, insights, and ideas help us create spaces that feel safer, more supportive, and more *you-shaped*.

Whether you've joined one of our sessions, explored our website, or just want to share a thought, book idea, resource, or suggestion - we'd love to hear from you.

Your feedback doesn't have to be formal or polished. Honest, imperfect, and heartfelt is welcome.

Access the Feedback Form below  
or visit us at <http://www.divergentnexusaus.com.au>  
and click "Contact" in the menu.

Prefer to send a message directly or use voice, pictures, or dot points instead of a form?

That's okay too. Let us know how we can walk beside you.

✉ Email us at: [divergentnexusaus@gmail.com](mailto:divergentnexusaus@gmail.com)

🧠 Your views helps us build a place to belong, together.  
Thank you for being part of it.

📝 Access our feedback form here:

**Feedback Form**



*If something in this newsletter isn't accessible to you, or you'd prefer information in another format, please contact us and we'll do our best to help.*

**Divergent Nexus Australia Incorporated - DNA Inc.**

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GRANN acknowledges the Bailai, Gurang, Gooreng Gooreng and Taribelang Bunda people who are the traditional custodians of the land on which we reside and pay respect to Elders

**past, present and emerging. We extend that respect to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island people.**

**Always Was. Always Will Be.  
Sovereignty Was Never Ceded.**