

Submission to Senate Community Affairs Legislation Committee
on the *National Disability Insurance Scheme Amendment —
Securing the NDIS for Future Generations Bill* (2026)

10 July 2026

About VALID

VALID ([Victorian Advocacy League for Individuals with Disability](#)) is the Victorian peak advocacy organisation for adults with intellectual disability and their families.

Since 1989, VALID has been at the forefront of advancing the rights and interests of people with intellectual disability and their families in Victoria. VALID's mission is to promote and protect the human rights of people with an intellectual disability and to champion their rights as citizens.

Always led by, and for, people with disability, we take a multi-level approach to advocacy that involves Individual Advocacy, Self Advocacy, Systemic Advocacy, Community Development, Training and Consultation. This supports lived experience leadership and community members to shape the decisions that affect them.

VALID is also the Victorian state member of [Inclusion Australia](#) (IA), the national peak organisation representing the rights and interests of Australians with an intellectual disability and their families.

VALID is grateful for the opportunity to provide a submission on the [National Disability Insurance Scheme Amendment - Securing the NDIS for Future Generations Bill](#) (2026) (the Bill), and welcome future consultation on all aspects of the proposed reforms.

Summary of Recommendations

The proposed amendments undermine the original intent of the NDIS and require extensive further review and consideration. VALID strongly recommends the following

measures to support the sustainability of the NDIS and safeguard against harm, particularly for people with intellectual disabilities and their families:

- **The Bill not to be passed in its current form or within the current timeframe**
- **Unchecked Ministerial powers are unacceptable and any expanded powers must be amended to require stronger safeguards, transparency and accountability**
- **Participant review rights must be safeguarded, particularly regarding reduced funding or changes to support**
- **Assessment and eligibility tools must be developed and implemented through genuine co-design with people with intellectual disability**

Overview

The [National Disability Insurance Scheme](#) (NDIS) is vital to fulfilling Australia's international human rights obligations as a signatory to the [United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities](#) (UNCRPD) and its *Optional Protocol*. Central to these obligations is addressing exclusionary practices that separate and isolate people from society, especially the right to live independently, and the rights to education, full community participation and adequate safeguards.

- Article 3 states “*Respect for inherent dignity, individual autonomy including the freedom to make one's own choices, and independence of persons.*”

The NDIS, alongside [Australia's Disability Strategy](#) (2021-2031), has enabled people with disability to not just participate, but to be meaningfully included in their communities. Instead of individual service providers setting limitations on supports, increasingly people with disabilities have greater choice and control over their lives.

Similarly, mainstream communities have benefitted from the visibility, participation and economic contribution of people with disability. The *Bill* in its current form puts this at risk and jeopardises a future of greater inclusion and belonging.

While VALID welcomes measures to improve sustainability for the NDIS, this can be achieved without risking participants' immediate safety and supports. The Bill would

dramatically change who is eligible, who is excluded and what supports are funded, shifting the responsibilities to families, unpaid carers, and public health and social systems. Alongside the introduction of unchecked Ministerial powers, a lack of safeguards and lack of alternative supports, this will only deepen exclusion and reverse the rights for which people with disabilities have fought so hard.

The [Explanatory Memorandum](#) (2026) refers to the “original intent” of the NDIS 34 times, stating the proposed changes will bring the NDIS closer to the original Parliamentary intentions of 2013. However, the proposed radical changes to safeguards and supports for people with disability directly contradict this position.

Given the unreasonably short timeframe for submissions and the magnitude of the proposed cuts, VALID was restricted in our ability to properly consult with our members and supporters, leading to our decision to endorse the submission of [Inclusion Australia](#) rather than prepare a VALID submission. While this two-week extension period is welcome, it remains inadequate to understand and communicate the complex changes to the people most impacted by them.

The government cannot “cut first, design systems later.” The dangers of a rushed legislative reform that prioritises immediate cost reduction over robust parliamentary scrutiny, careful consultation, genuine co-design, broader public engagement and evidence-based policy cannot be overstated. The proposed reforms prioritise cutting funding supports rather than fixing system inefficiencies, but these costs don’t disappear. They shift onto unpaid carers, health, welfare and social service systems. The public emphasis on participant fraud risks, shifting financial and care responsibilities onto other sectors, has perpetuated harmful ableist stereotypes of people with a disability as a societal burden. [People With Disabilities Australia](#) (PWDA) states:

“Such framing fosters stigma, fear and hostility towards the disability community. Participants report feeling increasingly abandoned, disempowered and deeply concerned about losing access to the Scheme, which remains their sole source of essential support.” (p.8)

Over 200 people attended [VALID's Advocacy in Action 2026 Conference](#) held on 22-23 June, and similarly echoed that the Bill will cause immediate, significant and long-lasting harm and further reinforce stigma and discrimination.

We cannot go back to institutional disability support.

Impacts on people with an intellectual disability

The short submission timeframe and lack of accessible consultation and documentation such as Easy Read materials have significant implications for people with an intellectual disability. [Inclusion Australia](#) states:

“Easy Read materials were not provided on the Department of Health, Disability and Ageing website until Thursday 21 May, leaving only 7 business days for people with an intellectual disability to access and understand the proposed changes, seek support to interpret the material and take part in the consultation.” (p.5)

People with an intellectual disability rely on accessible, unbiased information and alternative submission options. When these are not provided, an entire community of people with disability are excluded. People with intellectual disability not only face unique barriers to community access but also compounding marginalisation within broader disability communities and general populations ([Barrington et al, 2026](#); [Wyborn et al, 2025](#)).

Such barriers to effective consultation further reinforce ableist attitudes and disempowerment, impacting how people with intellectual disability and their families seek information and support, advocate for themselves and view themselves ([Barrington et al, 2026](#); [Pelleboer-Gunnink et al, 2017](#); [Rinaldi & Batsele, 2022](#)).

Further cuts to NDIS supports and disconnection between services will only exacerbate the barriers to care for people with intellectual disability. The [National Roadmap](#) (2021) highlights how important collaborative and integrated care is to ensure continuity of care, understanding of different communication methods and trust and rapport between families, carers and health professionals. This is particularly true for people with intellectual disability who are multiply marginalised,

including those experiencing poverty, gendered violence, living in rural, regional and remote locations, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, people from culturally and racially marginalised backgrounds and LGBTIQ+ communities.

Without external engagement and visibility in the community, the risk of people with intellectual disability experiencing violence, stigma and neglect also increases. This insidious “othering” not only perpetuates stigma but can reinforce cycles of trauma that without external oversight will increase barriers to support and safety.

VALID’s submission is informed by the expert analyses of our national peak bodies, [Inclusion Australia](#) and [People With Disabilities Australia](#). As its Victorian state member, VALID endorses the key recommendations of Inclusion Australia’s submission. We understand that as more information is presented, these recommendations may be subject to change.

VALID’s recommendations

- **The Bill not to be passed in its current form or within the current timeframe**
- **Unchecked Ministerial powers are unacceptable and any expanded powers must be amended to require stronger safeguards, transparency and accountability**
- **Participant review rights must be safeguarded, particularly regarding reduced funding or changes to support**
- **Assessment and eligibility tools must be developed and implemented through genuine co-design with people with intellectual disability**

Recommendation 1: The Bill not to be passed in its current form or within the current timeframe

The proposed changes are not consistent with the recommendations of the [Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People with Disability](#) (2023), the [NDIS Review](#) (2023), and the [UNCRPD](#) (2007). VALID is concerned that the proposed changes will further deepen existing inequities, particularly for people with intellectual disability.

The Bill in its current form contains significant risks, insufficient safeguards and overly broad powers that require genuine Parliamentary scrutiny and meaningful engagement with the disability community.

Recommendation 2: Unchecked Ministerial powers are unacceptable and any expanded powers must be amended to require stronger safeguards, transparency and accountability

The expansion of Ministerial powers under the proposed reforms is alarming and must be amended to ensure stronger safeguards, transparency and accountability.

The Minister will have powers to set prices, reduce funding and make blanket changes to any support by a specified percentage, through an instrument that cannot be challenged, across all budget categories, and to stop unspent funds being carried over at plan renewal. This would allow a person in this position to effectively gut the NDIS without ever being accountable to Parliament.

Even if we accept Minister Butler's assurances about the proposed amendments, the legislation itself is primarily a device to impose budgetary constraints, in violation of the whole-of-person and human rights framework on which the NDIS is based.

These changes mean a participant's community participation, capacity building or assistive technology funding could be cut without warning and without any right to appeal. Participants who save unspent funds across plan periods for high-cost items will lose the capacity to plan in this way, impacting their choice and control.

The changes represent a devastating risk for people with disability, particularly people with intellectual disability, who may without notice or recourse have their lives and supports upended.

What are the impacts of expanded Ministerial powers?

Increased risk of harm through automated decision making

The Minister has already announced his intention to cut Social, Civic and Community Supports by at least 50% and Capacity Building by at least 10%. This reduction will not be a reviewable decision ([Department of Health, Disability, and Ageing, 2026](#)).

The proposed timeframes for plan reassessments and plan renewals to allow for changes is severely restricted and will likely use an automated process. Automation relies on the input of accurate participant data by the NDIA. The [*NDIS Annual Sustainability Report*](#) (2024-5) clearly states “*there have continued to be significantly more participants missing a primary disability in the system compared to previous years*” (p.207). With the NDIA already demonstrating inaccurate data collection, there will clearly be a need for enhanced transparency and security in relation to data.

Increased risk of abuse and neglect from isolation

These funding cuts and restrictions will severely impact participants’ capacity to leave their homes, look for work and be actively included in their communities. This, combined with the Government’s changes to support worker ratios, will place untenable pressure on Supported independent Living (SIL) to provide support, increasing the risks that arise from isolation and congregation such as increased abuse and neglect.

NDIS cuts will shift cost and responsibilities onto informal carers, largely women

The NDIS already relies heavily on unpaid labour and assumed support from families, carers, informal networks and the community. The majority of primary carers are women, many of whom have disabilities themselves. Reduced supports for participants do not “cost-save” but rather “cost-shift” responsibilities back onto informal carers, mainly women. This has potentially significant consequences for women’s economic security ([*Women With Disabilities Australia, 2026*](#)).

“Expecting a parent to single-handedly provide the same level of care and support as a team of skilled, qualified, experienced support workers risks putting that family into further crisis and may lead to increased instances of carer burnout... more families will feel under threat because they’re reaching out for help because they’re not able to cope, but by doing so, it may indeed place them in a position of incredible vulnerability... families had already reported being told by staff at the agency running the NDIS ‘that if they weren’t able to fulfil their parental responsibility, ...they would be referred to child protective services’...”

[\(CEO of Children and Young People with Disability Australia, Skye Kakoschke-Moore\)](#)

Given some 43.8% of primary carers also have a disability themselves, and are often women with disability who are caring for children with disability, these cuts will inevitably lead to them having to cut back on paid employment, worsening their family's financial situation, increasing the risk to the child and deepening the socio-economic exclusion of women generally, and women with disability specifically ([ABS, 2024](#)).

"I am primary carer to my 6 year old child who is Autistic (level 2) with ADHD and a PDA profile. ...(and) I am also a woman with disabilities myself... My conditions are deteriorating (and) ... our son's circumstances have changed considerably in the last few years. We have been too scared, however, to seek changes to his plan as we worry he will lose what he already has. We know we need more support for him, but what if what we have is taken away?... the lack of transparency and possible cuts without warning would devastate us as a family trying to provide support." (Submission from a parent)

[VALID's key messages:](#)

- These cuts and changes are an attack on the lives of people with disability and their families.
- It is irresponsible of Government to press ahead with these changes without first establishing alternative supports, such as the as-yet undefined Foundational Supports, while at the same time denying participants the right to appeal.
- Unspent funds should carry over at plan renewal for participants saving for high-cost items. Any funding reduction should require independent review before taking effect.
- All decisions affecting NDIS eligibility and funding levels should be made through primary legislation subject to full Parliamentary scrutiny, with mandatory advance notice to affected participants before any changes take effect.
- The restriction on access to respite facilities that took effect in 2024 has already significantly increased the pressure on families ([NDIS, 2025](#)). Further cuts to

social and community participation would pose a risk to the health and wellbeing of families across the country, impacting their ability to care and contributing to the further deterioration of their mental health and wellbeing, while potentially raising the spectre of relinquishments.

- No reductions to community participation or capacity building supports should be made until Foundational Supports are fully operational, adequately funded and demonstrably able to meet the needs of those who will lose NDIS supports.

Recommendation 3: Participant review rights must be safeguarded, particularly regarding reduced funding or changes to support

The Bill changes the rules for existing NDIS participants and makes it harder to challenge some decisions about supports and funding. It also restricts when participants can request a reassessment, removes review rights for automatic plan renewals and makes funding reductions non-reviewable. These combined changes will mean participants are subject to narrower criteria with significantly fewer avenues to challenge decisions about their supports.

This jeopardises existing NDIS participants, who could be reassessed under stricter rules. If a participant's funding is reduced or their plan renewed automatically, they may have limited or no ability to challenge that decision, making it harder to obtain extra support when circumstances or support needs change. Participants may not be aware the rules have changed until their plan is affected.

Further, the Bill allows an automated process to make decisions, not only on claims and payments but regarding critical judgment calls and requests. A handful of decisions are automated from the outset, but the Minister can add more decision types at his discretion. If the automated process makes a mistake, nothing in the Bill requires that a person stop or fix this ([Sections 34A, 34B, 50A, 59E](#)).

VALID's key messages:

- A "no harm" safeguard should be established to ensure no current participant loses access to supports unless equivalent supports are in place, with independent review rights in place before any exit decision and with access to unscheduled reassessments preserved.

- Key decisions shaping the lives of participants, whether they qualify for the NDIS and what supports they can access, should not be subject to change without Parliamentary debate and public scrutiny.
- Ensure mandatory human review prior to any adverse decision and ensure all automated decisions are subject to full merits review, including through access to the Administrative Review Tribunal.

Recommendation 4: Assessment tools must be developed and implemented through genuine co-design with people with intellectual disability

The Bill will allow the NDIS to introduce functional capacity assessments to determine a person's eligibility. It also proposes that the Instrument for Classification and Assessment of Support Needs (I-CAN), a functional capacity assessment tool, will be used to identify the support needs of all people with disability.

I-CAN has not been validated to ensure it will sufficiently identify the needs of all people with disability, including those whose needs may be fluctuating or episodic and therefore not captured in a point-in-time assessment. The tool also needs to be culturally appropriate for First Peoples with disability ([PWDA, 2025](#)).

Moreover, the Bill shifts assessment from a whole-of-person consideration to a single eligible impairment. Read together with the eligibility thresholds, the tool used must apparently also be capable of identifying whether a person meets the threshold for that single impairment ([APH, 2026](#)).

This removes the concept of whole-of-person assessment and replaces it with a single eligible impairment approach. In addition, the provision allowing assessors to consider environmental factors and other "ineligible" impairments in determining support needs is to be removed ([APH, 2026](#)).

Once in the scheme, a participant's supports will only be assessed against a single eligible impairment rather than their whole experience. A person's individual circumstances or situation will not be considered, including ability to pay for treatment, where they live or whether treatment is actually available to them ([APH, 2026](#)).

In addition, if the assessment tool does not accurately capture the full extent of a person's disability, including needs that fluctuate or vary over time, a participant may be found ineligible or have their supports undercounted, with no guarantee the result reflects their actual experience.

MS Australia recommends that the NDIS Amendment Bill include:

“Clear guidance on how support needs are to be assessed where comorbidities or secondary conditions interact with a participant’s impairment, recognising that chronic health conditions are not always neatly separable from disability-related support needs and may, in some cases, contribute to the progression or worsening of disability.” ([MS Australia](#))

VALID’s key messages:

- The Government’s establishment of a Technical Advisory Group to guide the design and development of the proposed assessment tool is to be commended. However, this was a key recommendation by the Productivity Commission and saw the NDIS’s failure to develop such a tool as a major fault of the Scheme ([DHDA, 2026](#)).
- A comprehensive approach is critical to ensure the assessment tool is not weaponised and people removed from the Scheme, an unintended consequence resulting from a lack of adequate codesign. We reject any intention to introduce the tool without a thorough and comprehensive program of research, development and validation conducted in partnership with Disability Representative Organisations and their members across the country.
- A person’s disability and functioning capacity is not the only determinant of support needs, context is critical. The World Health Organisation International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health recognises that environmental factors have a critical impact on functioning ([WHO, 2001](#)).
- The determination of eligibility and the assessment of support needs are separate issues that require different instruments and separate decision-making processes. VALID is concerned at the possibility of the two processes being

linked, particularly if the same teams of people within the Agency are responsible for managing them.

- By linking support needs assessment to the determination of eligibility, the Agency will discourage people from striving for greater independence due to the risk of suddenly being made ineligible. Instead of promoting independence, the changes risk creating greater dependence. For example, one can look to the failure of supported employment services to produce results in gaining open employment, as the viability of services depended on sheltered workshops retaining their most productive workers and holding them back.
- The assessment of support needs requires a comprehensive understanding of the person in the context of their environment, in order not only to protect them from being under-supported, but also to guard against them being over-supported and made more dependent.
- The identification of support needs requires a multi-factorial assessment – this means using a number of approaches and tools, as appropriate to the individual and their situation.
- Assessments must be carried out by qualified and experienced people who have the assessment and interviewing skills appropriate for different individuals and disabilities. This means that a “one size fits all” assessment and planner is not appropriate across the range of NDIS participants.
- A skilled planner will take a “convergence of evidence” approach – this means the participant’s support needs are identified through multiple sources of information, including families. A skilled planner will not take a score from one support needs assessment as the final “truth”.
- A “one size / assessment fits all” approach does not work, and pairing it with automated decision-making is potentially disastrous. The assessment of support needs is a complex process that cannot be performed by an automated program.
- The Government must not proceed with a requirement to exhaust “appropriate treatment” options, as there are no safeguarding measures around participant harm due to side effects or complications, a participant’s financial ability to pay or their geographic capacity to access treatments.
- The Government must not proceed with I-CAN as the functional capacity assessment tool unless and until it has been demonstrably validated to identify

the needs of all people with disability, including those with episodic or fluctuating disability, and is also demonstrated to be culturally appropriate for First Peoples with disability.

Endorsement of Further Recommendations

VALID strongly endorses Inclusion Australia's submission and refers the Committee to the following recommendations made in it:

Recommendation 1

- We recommend the Bill not be passed in its current form. We urge the Community Affairs Legislation Committee to recommend that the Senate extend the inquiry timeframe to ensure the disability community – including people with an intellectual disability and their families – have a genuine opportunity to engage with and respond to the proposed amendments.

Recommendation 2

- Far-reaching Ministerial powers should not be delegated to determinations and must be scrutinised thoroughly by the Parliament in primary legislation rather than being left to the Minister. We are deeply sceptical that any such power for the minister could be appropriate, but operating without strict time limits on any order, a thorough process of independent auditing and consultation before orders are made, or without duties on the minister to assess the very significant impact such powers will have on human rights makes the risk of harm extremely high.

Recommendation 3

- The definition of functional capacity should actively consider a person's environment and the support they already receive or accommodations that are already in place. There should also be a manifest eligibility pathway to ensure that people already receiving support through the NDIS have a more straightforward path to getting assessed rather than trying to assess them in a vacuum.

Recommendation 4

- Prohibit the use of restrictive practice as a potential "treatment" when determining the permanence of an impairment. The legislative threshold for treatments should also be limited to only those treatments that could ameliorate a person's disability to the extent that they no longer experience a substantial reduction in their

functional capacity - not just anything that could improve the impact of their disability a small amount.

Recommendation 5

- Include a provision in section 48A allowing the ability to trigger plan reassessments when a person wishes to undertake a significant life event.

Recommendation 6

- Proposed subsection 33(2EA) should be replaced with an individual assessment of other available services in this area, incentivising local service delivery outside the Scheme while ensuring people still have choice about how they receive support. The government should also restore improvements made in the last substantial NDIS amendment which assessed people as a whole person, including the impact of multiple disabilities (if applicable), their environment and their living arrangements.

Recommendation 7

- Self-directed supports and services-for-one arrangements — including where restrictive practices or behaviour support plans are in place — must not be captured within the initial implementation stage of mandatory registration for high-risk supports.¹ Premature inclusion of these arrangements within mandatory registration requirements risks significant unintended consequences, especially for people who are more likely to have experience violence, abuse, neglect and exploitation in group-based supports and are now supported in bespoke, highly individualised arrangements. No mandatory registration requirements should apply to these arrangements until there has been detailed co-design with people with disability, families and representative organisations – including families who run a service-for-one – alongside transparent consultation regarding regulatory impacts, safeguarding outcomes and market consequences.

¹ VALID's overall position on mandatory provider registration is that a thoughtful, nuanced and co-designed approach with people with intellectual and other disabilities, their family members and advocates is essential. We stand behind the recommendations made by the NDIS Provider and Worker Registration Taskforce in 2024. VALID's Position Statement can be found here: <https://valid.org.au/valids-position-on-mandatory-ndis-provider-registration/>

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