

## **MEDIA RELEASE**

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### **Careful consideration of NDIS amendments are crucial**

Peak body for all psychologists, the Australian Association of Psychologists (AAPi), says like the state premiers, it also shares concerns around proposed amendments to the NDIS, and is calling for careful consideration to ensure support for all disabled Australians remains accessible.

AAPi Chief Services Officer Amanda Curran said in its submission to the Community Affairs Legislation Committee it has outlined a number of key recommendations regarding the amendments.

“While we support the four guiding principles of the proposed bill, we have a number of concerns around access and support barriers, needs assessment, definition of NDIS support, equitable consideration of disabilities and information gathering powers,” she said.

The concerns as outlined in the submission are below.

**Access and Support Barriers:** The existing operational guidelines create unnecessary hurdles, particularly in relation to the roles of psychologists. AAPi argues for the recognition of all psychologists, not just clinical psychologists or medical professionals, to assess and diagnose mental health conditions, intellectual disabilities and autism, reflecting their qualifications under Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency standards.

**Needs Assessments:** Proposed changes to needs assessment processes could be non-reviewable. Transparent, consultative, and technically skilled assessments are crucial to ensure accuracy in participant budget determinations.

There is a risk that inaccurate needs assessments would result in participants being unable to access essential support and that they would not be able to access a reassessment should this be the case.

The Bill needs to explicitly outline processes for replacement assessment - who can order it, who can perform it and under what circumstances, as well as a person’s rights if the NDIA refuses to arrange/grant a needs reassessment. Too much power is at the Minister’s discretion to decide these matters outside of a formal senate review.

**Information Gathering Powers:** AAPi does not support broad powers that would allow the NDIA to request personal health information directly from healthcare providers, which could infringe on privacy rights and overlook the need for informed consent.

AAPi is also concerned that the proposed new powers will penalise participants if they do not provide evidence within very short timeframes, without taking into account the current specialist services waitlists and workforce shortages as well as the financial crisis that

disproportionally affects those with disabilities, those in rural and remote locations and those from minority groups. Information-gathering powers should be more limited regarding the type of information that can be requested and the restrictions on the negative consequences of failing to comply.

**Equitable Consideration of Disabilities:** The removal of the distinction between primary and secondary disabilities is supported as a positive step towards holistic care. However, AAPi calls for the continued acceptance of psychological assessments in determining participant support needs.

**Definition of NDIS Supports:** The bill is both unclear and confusing regarding sources of funding, from either the NDIS or different levels of government. The rules that will guide decisions around funded supports need to be made clear before legislative changes are made so there are not unintended adverse consequences for disabled Australians.

AAPi strongly urges the inclusion of detailed procedural guidelines in the legislation to ensure that the rights and needs of participants are safeguarded. Without this inclusion, we cannot support this legislation due to potential harm to the disabled community.

AAPi also requests to be actively involved in the consultation process to develop appropriate needs assessment tools and to ensure that the legislative framework supports the realistic and compassionate treatment of all participants within the NDIS.

ENDS