



**The Hon Stuart Robert MP  
Minister for the National Disability Insurance Scheme  
Minister for Government Services**

Ref: MC20-002150

Ms Deidre Mackechnie  
Chief Executive Officer  
MS Australia  
Level 19 Northpoint Building  
100 Miller Street  
NORTH SYDNEY NSW 2060

Dear Ms Mackechnie

Thank you for your letter of 4 November 2020 regarding reforms to the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS), including the introduction of independent assessments.

I acknowledge the work that MS Australia does in researching, advocating and raising awareness about multiple sclerosis and appreciate your feedback.

The Australian Government is on track to deliver the most substantial package of reforms to the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) since its establishment, while at the same time, we have continued to make significant improvements to the NDIS.

The reform package will deliver on the final elements of the Productivity Commission's original design for the NDIS, and make it simpler, faster, fairer and more flexible for participants, and their families and carers. It includes the implementation of the Government's response to the 2019 independent *Review of the National Disability Insurance Scheme Act 2013* (Tune Review) and our commitment to implement the NDIS Participant Service Guarantee. These reforms will help deliver on the promise of the NDIS – to provide Australians with a permanent and significant disability true choice and control over a flexible support package to achieve their goals.

Further information about the reforms is available in the *NDIS Reforms - Information Paper* on the Department of Social Services' website: <https://www.dss.gov.au/disability-and-carers-programs-services-for-people-with-disability-national-disability-insurance-scheme-2019-review-of-the-ndis-act-and-the-new-ndis-participant-service-guarantee/ndis-reforms-information-paper>

There are some important reasons why independent assessments are being introduced for all participants and applicants for the NDIS. The National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA) wants all people, regardless of their situation, or where they live, to have the same access to internationally recognised, evidence based assessments. This will ensure the NDIS is fair and consistent for all participants.

Assessment of a person's function has always been part of the NDIS planning process, however current arrangements can be complex, costly and inconsistent. NDIS participants have reported they have spent thousands of dollars chasing assessments to show their functional capacity and some Australians cannot afford the same access to professionals as others. Access to the NDIS should not be limited to those who can pay the most for a report. That is why independent assessments will be free.

It is important that all NDIS participants are treated equally to ensure all decisions made in access and planning are made using the same level of impartial data and consistent criteria. An independent assessment will provide a consistent, transparent and equitable way to capture information about a person's functional capacity, without making assumptions based on disability.

The introduction of independent assessments has been part of an ongoing discussion regarding improvements to the NDIS experience. By making assessments mandatory it provides complete and consistent information to the NDIA to ensure the NDIS is fair and consistent for all participants regardless of their background or circumstances.

Prior to independent assessments commencing in 2021, the NDIA is engaging widely with participants, their families and carers, peak bodies, disability organisations, peer and family networks to help develop and test how independent assessments will work. The NDIA has released 3 consultation papers to support this engagement:

1. Consultation paper: access and eligibility policy for independent assessments
2. Consultation paper: planning policy for personalised budgets and plan flexibility
3. Consultation paper: supporting young children and their families early, to reach their full potential.

These consultation papers explain the proposed changes to NDIS, including what these changes will mean for participants. The consultation papers are available on the NDIS website:

<https://www.ndis.gov.au/community/have-your-say>

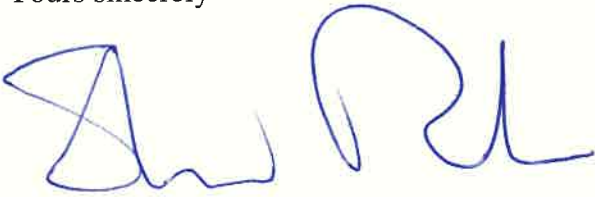
I encourage people with disability, participants, their families and carers and the broader disability sector to have their say on the proposed changes to make the NDIS simpler, faster, fairer and more flexible. Their feedback will help to ensure the design and delivery of proposed changes result in a Scheme that works for them.

By introducing independent assessments later in 2021, the NDIA has more time to complete the second pilot and receive feedback directly from participants and peak bodies. I encourage you to provide feedback through this consultation period by visiting:  
<https://myform.apps.ndia.gov.au/?src=https://forms.apps.ndia.gov.au/jpgbthlbzknpuvv/ndisconsultation&org=ndis&theme=ndis>

The Government's priority has always been and will continue to be, ensuring participants receive the disability-related supports they need.

I trust this information is of assistance to you.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, consisting of a stylized 'S' followed by 'R' and 'B'.

**Stuart Robert**

CC Martin Hoffman, Chief Executive Officer, NDIA

18 JAN 2021