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MS AUSTRALIA'S RESPONSE TO THE 2026-27 FEDERAL BUDGET

IMPACT ON THE MS COMMUNITY

MS Australia has undertaken an analysis of the 2026-27 Budget to explore how it will impact the lives of people living with MS across healthcare, disability, aged care and broader social supports

The Budget includes welcome investments in medical research, bulk billing, Medicare Urgent Care Clinics, Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (PBS) listings, mental health, aged care reform, employment services and some aspects of National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) reform. It also commits funding to foundational supports and programs outside the NDIS, which are critical for people with disability who need community-based assistance.

However, significant concerns remain, including limited clarity about how and when foundational supports will be delivered, no meaningful increase to income support payments, and ongoing gaps between disability and aged care systems.

Research

Great progress has been made in MS over the past 30 years, with the development of numerous targeted MS therapies where previously none existed. Despite the incredible progress made, MS remains a serious burden on people's quality of life and on the economy. The great unmet need in MS is to prevent, halt and reverse neurological damage and disability. This can only be done with continued investment in health and medical research.

MS Australia is a member of the Neurological Alliance Australia (NAA), a collective of not-for-profit peak or national patient organisations representing adults and children living with neurological or neuromuscular conditions or neurological disorders in Australia. The vision of the NAA is a world where these conditions are preventable, detectable, manageable, and curable. To make progress toward that vision we urgently need more research investment.

Medical Research Future Fund

MS Australia welcomes the Government's announcement that provision has been made for **\$508.5 million in additional funding over four years** to increase disbursements from the **Medical Research Future Fund**, with annual funding set to rise from \$650.0 million in 2025-26 to \$1.0 billion annually from 2030-31. Funding will be held in the Contingency Reserve pending finalisation of the National Health and Medical Research Strategy.

Other Relevant Medical Research Measures

Additional medical research measures that will support MS research:

- **National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC): \$24.3 million over two years from 2026–27** to provide an uplift in operating resources for the National Health and Medical Research Council to continue to fund high-quality health and medical research and build research capacity, and for a feasibility study for the establishment of a Research Grant Hub.
- **National One Stop Shop: \$15.8 million over two years from 2026–27** to continue the development of the National One Stop Shop to streamline approvals for clinical trials and human research. This should streamline ethics and site approvals nationally and could lead to faster startup of MS trials, less duplication across states, and better access to clinical trials for people with MS over time.

Disability

NDIS

One in three Australians living with MS are NDIS recipients and rely on the essential services and supports that the NDIS provides to meet their disability needs, maintain independence and be an active and engaged member of their community.

MS Australia welcomes the allocation of **\$175.4 million over four years** from 2025–26 (and \$110.9 million per year ongoing) to support people with disability and to improve the quality of supports delivered through the NDIS. This includes funding to implement a range of NDIS reforms announced by Minister Butler on 22 April 2026:

- develop and implement a **new enrolment and digital payment system** to improve payment integrity and reduce fraud and non-compliant payments
- roll-out and implementation of **new framework planning** from 1 April 2027
- introduce **mandatory registration of high-risk NDIS providers**
- **commission plan management and support coordination services** for NDIS participants

The budget also includes **\$200 million over three years** from 2026–27 to establish an Inclusive Communities Fund to support community organisations to deliver group based social and community participation activities and individual capacity building support for NDIS participants. This will provide valuable group supports for many people living with disability. However, they should not come at the cost of individualised, participant driven social and community supports.

There are also funds to support the **ongoing operations of the NDIS and NDIS Commission, extend the NDIS appeals program, establish a Technical Advisory Group and support community engagement on the design and implementation of reforms**. Any reforms to the NDIS must be done with full transparency and consultation with the disability community, following co-design principles. Consultation should not be a one-way process with no opportunity for feedback and improvement. Funding for the operations of the NDIS should focus on improving the training and skillset of the NDIA workforce including improved disability awareness.

The Government noted that changes to **NDIS assessments based on functional capacity** will not commence until 1 January 2028, with the Budget providing \$3.3 million in 2026–27 to establish a Technical Advisory Group to help design the new assessment tools and instruments. While this delayed start creates time for proper design, we remain deeply concerned about the risks for people with MS if the assessment model does not properly reflect the nature of the disease. MS is a progressive disease with symptoms that are often intermittent, fluctuating and unpredictable, meaning a one-off assessment or narrow functional snapshot could seriously understate a person's disability and support needs.

These NDIS measures are projected to **reduce growth in NDIS payments** by \$37.8 billion over four years from 2026–27. The Government sees these as crucial reforms to support restoring the NDIS to its original intent and to secure the Scheme for future generations. Any growth in the Scheme should not come at the cost of people with disability losing access to the supports that they need. Any individual participant funding decisions should not be driven by the desire to reduce growth but led by the use of clear, accessible and disability focused assessment and planning processes.

MS Australia will continue to advocate for improvements to the NDIS. You can learn more about our NDIS advocacy on our [NDIS webpage](#).

Foundational Supports

The Government has allocated **\$3 billion over five years** to establish Foundational Supports outside the NDIS, to be matched by states and territories as agreed by National Cabinet.

Foundational supports are vital for the people living with MS who are not eligible for the NDIS but still require community-based supports, information and advice, advocacy and family and carer support. These supports are crucial to the new unified ecosystem of supports for people with disability that are at the core of the NDIS Review recommendations.

The Government will also provide **\$2.0 billion over five years from 2026–27** to deliver national services, fund enabling supports and contribute to state and territory services for the **Thriving Kids program**.

MS Australia is concerned that there continues to be a lack of clarity on how and when Foundational Supports and the Thriving Kids program will be implemented. With the Government committed to a reduction in the growth and overall number of people on the Scheme, it is crucial that these supports are established as soon as possible to support those who are no longer eligible for the NDIS.

Survey of Disability, Ageing and Carers

The Government has allocated **\$14.2 million over three years** from 2027–28 to deliver the National Health Survey and further refine the Survey of Disability, Ageing and Carers. This survey collects valuable data on people with disability, people aged 65 and over and carers, and is a crucial resource in MS Australia's advocacy work.

Healthcare

People living with MS rely on a well-funded and inclusive healthcare system. The following key healthcare measures from the Budget hold significant importance for people living with MS.

Bulk Billing

The Government is expanding access to bulk billing, allocating **\$25.3 million over three years** from 2026–27 to deliver up to six fully bulk billing general practice (GP) clinics in the Central Coast, Newcastle, Lake Macquarie, and Hunter regions. By 2030, 9 out of 10 GP visits are expected to be bulk billed. Improved access to bulk billing will reduce out-of-pocket costs, making primary healthcare more accessible for people living with MS.

The Government is also expanding access to Medicare Urgent Care Clinics with **\$1.8 billion over five years** from 2025–26 (and \$580.2 million per year ongoing) to fund the clinics on an ongoing basis to support Australians to access bulk-billed care for urgent, but not life-threatening, conditions. By 30 June 2026, 4 out of 5 Australians are expected to live within a 20-minute drive from a local Medicare Urgent Care Clinic. Access to these clinics provide 24-7 urgent care and reduce the need to call an ambulance or attend the Emergency Department at a hospital.

Medicines

A commitment of **\$5.9 billion over five years** from 2025–26 for new and amended listings on the PBS, including ublituximab (Briumvi®) (from 1 January 2026) for the treatment of people with relapsing-remitting MS.

Mental Health

Many people living with MS experience poor mental health, including depression and anxiety. Access to mental health supports is crucial to improving their mental and physical wellbeing.

The Government has allocated **\$283.2 million over four years** from 2025–26 to continue to strengthen Australia's mental health and suicide prevention system, to fund mental health and suicide prevention activities.

Other Relevant Healthcare Measures

Additional healthcare measures that will reduce costs and improve access to healthcare for people living with MS include:

- **Medicare: \$745.1 million over four years** from 2026–27 (and \$17.6 million per year ongoing) to strengthen the integrity and functionality of critical Medicare systems and infrastructure. This includes funding to enhance My Health Record and improve non-compliance and fraud detection across the Medicare Benefits Schedule and PBS.
- **National Health Reform Agreement (NHRA): \$25 billion** to the states and territories to fund public hospitals.
- **Medical Costs Finder: \$2.1 million in 2026–27** to help address the high and increasing costs of seeing a specialist. Funds will improve informed financial consent and standardised fee disclosure through the Medical Costs Finder.

Aged Care

Many older Australians living with MS must pursue their disability needs through the aged care system.

MS Australia welcomes the increased investment in aged care in this budget. The Government has committed **\$565.1 million over four years from 2026–27** (and \$2.1 million per year ongoing) for strengthened regulatory, governance and quality arrangements, sector viability and workforce supports to provide better care for older Australians. There is also **\$606.5 million over four years from 2026–27** (and an additional \$3.0 billion from 2030–31 to 2035–36) to respond to the Residential Aged Care Accommodation Pricing Review to stimulate an increase in bed supply and to protect equity of access for supported residents.

Support at Home

MS Australia welcomes the increased funding of **\$1.4 billion over four years from 2026–27** (and \$377.3 million per year ongoing) to improve affordability and access to home care supports, including funding to ensure the service type 'personal care' (including showering) is fully funded by the government for all care recipients in the Support at Home program.

MS Australia continues to call on the Government to ensure that the aged care system meets the needs of older people with disability. Despite the increase in home care supports funding, there is still a significant gap between funding for aged care and the funding available under the NDIS. Additionally, many people are still waiting up to 12 months to receive any aged care funding.

The new Support at Home classifications provide funding of between \$10,731.00 and \$78,106.35 per year. Even allowing for additional funds from the Assistive Technology and Home Modifications (AT-HM) program, there is still a significant disparity with NDIS funding. Outlined below are the average annual payments for NDIS participants with MS:

NDIS PARTICIPANTS WITH MS	AVERAGE ANNUAL PAYMENTS	AVERAGE ANNUAL COMMITTED PAYMENTS
All participants	\$105,700	\$138,400
Participants in Supported Independent Living (SIL)	\$545,500	\$608,900
Participants not in SIL	\$87,500	\$119,800

Data as at 31 December 2025 from the NDIS Quarterly Report

This data also shows that participants who have access to SIL have significant budgets. Access to appropriate housing is crucial for people living with MS maintaining their independence. Older people with disability need access to housing that is driven by participant choice and control and that best meets their individual needs and long and short-term goals. Older Australians should not have to enter residential aged care because they cannot access appropriate housing in the community.

Aged Care Workforce

Aged care workers are crucial to the delivery of high-quality, person-centred aged care. MS Australia welcomes the investment of **\$1.0 million over two years** from 2026–27 to progress the implementation of a **national worker registration scheme for personal care workers** employed in aged care. This worker registration scheme should be expanded to include disability support workers to ensure consistency across the care and support sector and to increase the professionalisation of the support worker workforce.

Social and economic support

Tax Cuts

People living with MS face higher costs of living, including expenses related to prescription and non-prescription medications, hospital admissions, consultations with healthcare professionals, mobility equipment, and home modifications. The Government has announced **three tax cut measures** which should assist some people living with MS with the costs of living:

- A **new tax cut for every working Australian taxpayer** by introducing a \$250 Working Australians Tax Offset from the 2027–28 income tax year. The Working Australians Tax Offset will provide a permanent annual tax offset for Australians for their income derived from work, such as wages and salaries and the business income of sole traders, from 1 July 2027.
- From 1 July 2026, the **16 per cent tax rate on taxable income between \$18,201 and \$45,000 will drop** to 15 per cent. From 1 July 2027, the tax rate will drop to 14 per cent. This should support people living with MS who work part-time or in lower wage employment.
- **\$1,000 instant tax deduction** to workers from 2026–27. Australian tax residents who earn income from work will be eligible for the instant tax deduction and will not need to itemise and claim work-related expenses if claiming less than \$1,000.

Employment

People with disability face lower employment prospects. They may require access to specialist disability employment supports to help navigate recruitment processes, workplace environments, training opportunities, and finding suitable employers and roles.

The Government has allocated **\$316.1 million over five years** from 2025–26 (and \$36.7 million per year ongoing) to continue supporting Australians into employment and improve participant experience including:

- **\$285.6 million over five years** from 2025–26 (and \$35.9 million per year ongoing) for improvements to the employment services system and to support future reform
- **\$26.5 million over three years from 2026–27** to increase resourcing for the National Customer Service Line to support job seekers and employers
- **\$3.2 million over four years from 2026–27** (and \$0.8 million per year ongoing) to extend the Carer Inclusive Workplace Initiative to assist employers to develop and adopt practices which support employees with caring responsibilities to enter and remain in the workforce
- **\$0.8 million in 2026–27** to extend the National Disability Abuse and Neglect Hotline and the Complaints Resolution and Referral Service.

Income Support

MS Australia is deeply concerned that the Budget does not include any real increases to income support payments such as the Disability Support Pension (DSP) or JobSeeker. This omission leaves many individuals living with MS in a precarious financial position.

As highlighted in our submissions to the Senate inquiries into the [Extent and Nature of Poverty](#) and the [Cost of Living](#), many people with MS depend on the DSP or JobSeeker as their primary source of income. The current payment rates are insufficient to cover the full costs associated with living with MS, leading to significant economic hardship and adversely affecting their health and wellbeing.

The [Economic Inclusion Advisory Committee's 2026 report](#) recommended increasing JobSeeker and related payments to enhance economic inclusion and alleviate poverty. This is the Committee's top priority and repeats calls made in previous reports. However, these recommendations have not been adopted in the current Budget.

We urge the Government to reconsider these critical recommendations and implement measures that provide adequate financial support to individuals living with MS and other disabilities, ensuring they can live with dignity and maintain their health and wellbeing.

Transport

MS Australia supports the Government's inclusion of aviation-specific disability standards as part of its **\$38.1 million, four-year investment** from 2026–27, with \$7.3 million ongoing annually, to strengthen protections for aviation consumers.