

Joint Standing Committee on the National Disability Insurance Scheme
PO Box 6100
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

PO Box 4093
Ainslie ACT 2602
T (02) 6230 1775
F (02) 6230 1704
anglicare@anglicare.asn.au
www.anglicare.asn.au

30 March 2021

Dear Senators and Members,

Joint Standing Committee on the National Disability Insurance Scheme Inquiry into Independent Assessments under the NDIS

Thank you for the opportunity to offer the Anglicare Australia Network's experience to the Committee. The ongoing attention to the NDIS that this Committee provides is integral in supporting the scheme to reach its full potential.

Anglicare Australia is deeply concerned about the impacts of the soon-to-be-mandatory independent assessment process for NDIS participants, and we do not accept the reasoning by which the Government is justifying this change. Above all, we are disappointed about the loss of choice and control for participants and the clear lack of insight into the specific and individual needs of a person with disability. With this change, the principles that underpin the very foundations of the NDIS will be left behind.

Moving to this system undercuts an individualised and person-centred approach, and this is an area of immense concern for our Network. The voice of the participant may be heard by an assessor with little to no experience or contact working with a person with a disability. Although an assessor may be "familiar" with a disability, this does not mean they have required experience or expertise. Whilst a support person can attend the appointment, it is not clear whether their input will be considered.

We hold particular concerns for the outcomes and wellbeing of people with psychosocial disabilities. These participants can be very guarded, even with someone they know, let alone with an assessor they have never met. It is critical that this cohort are afforded time to form a trusting relationship. If there is no rapport or trust, there is a major risk that they will not engage fully in the Scheme.

With regard to workforce issues, Anglicare Australia foresees the substantial impact this process will have on existing therapists servicing our clients. There is already a shortage of therapists, especially in rural areas. With the assessor roles needing to be filled, therapists who provide 'on the ground' services will be depleted.

We are also concerned about the impacts of competitive tender processes and sub-contracting on participant outcomes. With presumable incentives to win the tender again, assessors may lack the independence so frenetically pursued by the Government, and place priorities of the Government ahead of those of the participant.

Finally, the Government's commitment to a July 2021 timeline means there will be no meaningful opportunity to consider the results of the second pilot. It is critical that participants and stakeholders

have confidence in the Scheme, and this will mean considering the results of evaluations and putting the wellbeing of clients ahead of arbitrary deadlines.

Our Network strongly supports efforts to make the NDIS fairer and more accessible, in particular for people on low incomes. This change will not fulfil those aims. It belies difficulties in engagement, and high levels of stress for many participants, as well the existence of potential perverse outcomes which are yet to fully play out. Anglicare Australia is disappointed that the Government has taken a hurried broadsword to the whole assessment process instead of taking a more robust, nuanced approach to reform the system.

The proposed mandatory assessments are a blunt, rudimentary approach and should be replaced with a person-centred process that hands genuine choice and control back to the individual. Independent assessments should be available to participants for free and, if the participant wishes, should be supplemented by other evidence that supports them to get the services they need from the NDIS.

That the disability community itself is opposing these changes en masse should indicate that these changes will see the NDIS depart its motivation of serving the end users. Anglicare Australia offers our full support to this community and urge the parliament take heed of its advice.

Yours Sincerely



Kasy Chambers
Executive Director
Anglicare Australia