



**Submission: Culturally Inclusive
NDIS: Addressing Challenges
and Enabling Empowerment
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This is a submission on behalf of the Multicultural Disability Advocacy Association of NSW (MDAA) to provide feedback on the continuous enhancement of the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS). Our distinct focus revolves around individuals from Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) communities, allowing us to illuminate systemic issues within this framework. We greatly appreciate the opportunity to share our insights, informed by our extensive involvement with CALD communities and individuals with disabilities.

In addressing your inquiry, our responses to Questions 1, 2, 3, and 8 have been thoughtfully selected. These questions provide a platform for us to precisely address and emphasise the systemic challenges prevalent within the NDIS ecosystem.

How can we empower you through the planning process?

Navigating the NDIS planning process poses distinct and intricate challenges for People with Disability (PWD) from CALD communities. Language barriers stand as a formidable obstacle, as many CALD individuals struggle to comprehend the complex language of NDIS documentation and requirements, leading to misunderstandings. Cultural differences further influence perceptions of disability and caregiving, impacting how CALD individuals approach and engage with the NDIS. These differences can encompass preferences for specific types of support, the role of family in decision-making, and the significance of community involvement.

One of the most critical and often understated aspects that affects CALD communities during the NDIS planning process is the presence of stigma and shame. Within some cultures, disability can be associated with shame, leading individuals, and families to hide their challenges due to fear of judgment. This deeply ingrained stigma can hinder open conversations about support needs and preferences. It's not uncommon for CALD individuals to underreport their needs during the planning process, inadvertently reducing the effectiveness of the allocated support. Furthermore, the complex documentation and procedures of the NDIS can add to the already existing apprehension, making individuals reluctant to engage with a system that might be seen as alienating or daunting.

Addressing these challenges necessitates a multifaceted approach. Offering translated materials and multilingual support is crucial, but equally important is fostering cultural humility throughout the NDIS ecosystem. Providing guidance on how to sensitively navigate discussions around disability can help break down the barriers of stigma and shame. Collaborating with community leaders, educational institutions, disability organisations, and others can facilitate outreach, enhance awareness, and promote education through events and curricula. Embracing an approach that is both inclusive and culturally attuned, the NDIS can establish an environment where CALD individuals sense respect, comprehension, and empowerment during the entire planning journey.



What is the best way to provide supports for those not in the NDIS?

The NDIS should provide tailored support for CALD carers, recognising their unique challenges. Culturally sensitive respite care options can ease burdens, while acknowledging the importance of extended families and communities within CALD caregiving dynamics maintains cultural values. Collaborating closely with CALD community leaders and organisations is crucial to align strategies with cultural norms.

In addition, the NDIS plays a vital role in fostering inclusivity and enhancing public understanding of disability within CALD communities. Targeted public awareness campaigns to educate about disability rights, challenges, and the significance of inclusivity, focusing on CALD contexts. These campaigns work towards breaking stereotypes, lessening stigma, and nurturing empathy within communities. Collaborations with schools and businesses promote inclusive practices, while support for families and carers indirectly educates a wider audience about disability challenges. These initiatives collectively cultivate an inclusive and accessible NDIS.

How you would define reasonable and necessary?

The endeavour to establish a consistent approach among NDIS planners in implementing the concept of "reasonable and necessary" is indeed a recognised challenge. The legislative rules and guidelines are seemingly designed with an inherent breadth so not to limit possible disability supports. With strategic training and expert guidance, this very expansiveness can be harnessed for the benefit of participants and the NDIS scheme. It holds the potential to provide PWD, especially within the culturally intricate framework of CALD communities, a tailored and inclusive experience that aligns closely with their specific needs and backgrounds.

The broadness of "reasonable and necessary" presents an opportunity for NDIS planners to tailor support plans that align with the unique requirements of each participant. This potential can only be fully realised through a comprehensive understanding of the diverse perspectives and cultural nuances that CALD individuals bring. By imparting specialised training that emphasises cultural humility and sensitivity, NDIS planners can navigate the complexities of interpreting "reasonable and necessary" within a culturally diverse context. This would enable planners to recognise that essential support for CALD participants extends beyond mere services and interventions—it includes accounting for cultural values, family dynamics, and community contributions that are integral to caregiving within these communities.



By harnessing this approach, the NDIS can create a more inclusive and responsive support framework. It ensures that the principles of "reasonable and necessary" become a catalyst for understanding and embracing the unique requirements of CALD participants. With the right training, NDIS planners have the potential to not only address inconsistencies but also to enhance the quality of support provided, thereby empowering CALD individuals to navigate the NDIS journey while feeling valued and respected in their cultural identity.

What does good service from someone helping you navigate the NDIS look like?

A high-quality service provided by someone assisting with NDIS navigation encompasses a comprehensive and empathetic approach tailored to individual needs. Effective communication forms the cornerstone of this service. The individual offering assistance should use clear and easily understandable language to explain NDIS procedures, rights, and obligations. Building a foundation of trust is paramount, wherein transparently addressing concerns and ensuring that participants from CALD backgrounds feel acknowledged and comprehended are central tenets.

The service would ideally showcase a nuanced comprehension of the hurdles confronted by CALD communities during their involvement with the NDIS. This entails familiarity with the particular issues tied to language barriers, cultural disparities, and social stigma, coupled with the provision of pragmatic remedies. They must proactively supply translated materials, multilingual resources, and aid in deciphering complex documents, thereby ensuring equitable access to information for CALD individuals.

A comprehensive approach to support is pivotal. The service provider should acknowledge that CALD participants may require different types of support due to cultural norms and familial dynamics. This means offering flexible options for engagement, considering extended family involvement, and recognising that the meaning of "reasonable and necessary" can differ in diverse cultural contexts.

Ultimately, good service is a blend of cultural sensitivity, effective communication, and a deep commitment to ensuring that CALD individuals are empowered to fully engage with the NDIS. It's about recognising the unique hurdles faced by CALD communities, addressing them with flexibility and respect, and fostering an inclusive environment where every individual feels valued and supported on their NDIS journey.



Conclusion

We hope our responses have highlighted the NDIS challenges within CALD communities. We are grateful for the chance to contribute insights and recommendations to this ongoing enhancement process. Our dedication to actively engaging in the evolution of this framework remains strong as we collectively strive for a more equitable and accessible NDIS experience for everyone in our diverse society.