



Communique

NDIS WA Community Advisory Council (Council)

Meeting 2 – 12 March 2026

Council 2026 Forward Workplan and Advisory Pathway

- The Council's 2026 Forward Workplan was developed to include discussion topics suggested by members at its inaugural meeting on 10 December 2025.
- The Workplan proposes one key discussion topic for each quarterly meeting while maintaining flexibility to address emerging priorities throughout the year.
- Members provided feedback on the Workplan and emphasised the importance of examining NDIS data and trends, including active provider numbers and plan underutilisation in regional and remote areas, to inform deeper insights.
- The Council highlighted the need for clear narrative and context behind the data, aligning with sector experience and supported by insights from the National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA), NDIS Quality and Safeguards Commission and the Department of Communities (Communities). Council members endorsed the 2026 Forward Workplan.
- The Council also noted the need to better understand access barriers for families at the point of diagnosis.
- Western Australia's Executive Steering Committee (ESC) has a critical role in monitoring the NDIS and responding to emerging risks and supporting the day-to-day operation of the scheme in Western Australia.
- It was agreed that the Council will adopt a structured advisory pathway to share advice with ESC for consideration and feedback on proposed actions and next steps. Council and ESC meeting schedules are aligned to ensure Council meetings are held prior to ESC meetings.

Foundational Supports and Thriving Kids update

- The Department of Health, Disability and Ageing (DHDA), together with Communities, provided an update on the national Foundational Supports reforms and the Thriving Kids initiative.
- All governments, including Western Australia, have now signed the National Agreement on Foundational Supports, outlining how jurisdictions will work together to deliver foundational supports for children and families.
- Under this agreement, Australian governments will jointly invest up to \$4 billion over five years to deliver Thriving Kids, supporting children aged 0–8 with developmental delay and/or autism with low to moderate support needs.
- Bilateral agreements for Thriving Kids (2026–2031) are being finalised, setting out how each state and territory will implement the initiative.
- Thriving Kids services will commence from 1 October 2026 and progressively roll out to 1 January 2028, aligned to a national model. Services will be delivered in the environments where children live, learn and play. Thriving Kids supports will:
 - improve awareness of developmental delays
 - better identify developmental delays
 - build the skills of parents and families, connect them with other peers, and help them find quality information and advice
 - connect children and families to targeted supports that are focused on supporting development based on level of need.
- Western Australia's design and implementation approach has been shaped by extensive consultation, including cross-agency workshops, engagement with non-government organisations, and targeted discussions with families, children, Aboriginal communities, regional stakeholders, and disability advocacy organisations.
- Council members engaged in a robust discussion, raising several key themes including:

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- **System Gaps and Silos**
 - Need for stronger cross-agency collaboration to address gaps across child protection, housing, education and culturally appropriate services, particularly in regional areas where there are fewer services and a greater reliance on community points of contact such as local schools.
- **Workforce Challenges**
 - Focusing on structural barriers such as accommodation and travel is paramount to addressing the shortage of trained professionals in regional and remote areas, noting models developed by New Zealand and Canada to address similar issues.
 - Building on and utilising opportunities and government initiatives like free TAFE and training courses to increase the workforce.
 - Developing a regionally focused workforce by educating allied health professionals at university campuses in regional centres near where they live and by extending the regional campus offerings to include the allied health courses offered at their Perth campuses.
 - Utilising credentialed mental health nurses who have the capacity to perform Autism assessments and broader diagnostic and therapeutic processes. Better utilisation of this workforce presents an immediate, practical opportunity to improve access, particularly in regional and underserved areas.
 - Developing a lead provider or local coordination models that links services with schools and early childhood settings will support earlier identification and also provide families with a clear, trusted local point of contact to help navigate the system.
 - Building on established expertise, innovative models and partnerships to improve service delivery.
 - Reestablishing Telehealth services following regional visits and using therapy assistants to ensure ongoing support for families in regional and remote areas.
- **Early Identification and Diagnosis**
 - Promoting neuro-affirming language and safe engagement for families at the point of diagnosis to ensure ongoing support through the process.
 - The Commonwealth and all states and territories are exploring initiatives to upskill General Practitioners (GP), schools, and early childhood educators to support early identification and reduce the number of children and families falling through the gaps.
 - Embedding therapists in other settings, like childcare and schools, to support early conversations with families regarding diagnosis and navigation.
- **Person-Centred Approach**
 - Ensuring families and lived experience are kept at the forefront of design and implementation.
 - Using trusted community voices and targeted communication strategies to ensure consistent messaging for different cohorts.
 - A focus on lower socio-economic, culturally and linguistically diverse, and First Nations groups who traditionally have lower engagement in government health programs. This includes creating health promotion programs targeted at this cohort.
- **Navigation and Pathways**
 - It is important that the proposed “no wrong door” approach to ensure families receive guidance regardless of entry point provides a clear navigation path so that families don’t get trapped in a “revolving door”.
 - The need for an accurate and easy to use provider finder, to find and link services for participants, families and professionals.
 - Families need a clear local point of contact to help guide them through these systems. This includes lead provider models to support coordination at a local level and strengthening links with community groups and building on existing service models
 - The Commonwealth and all states and territories are working towards mutual recognition of assessments across systems to streamline pathways. For example, if an assessment is used and recognised in the Thriving Kids context, then it should also be recognised by the NDIS, to make that pathway as smooth as possible.

Next meeting: Wednesday 17 June 2026.