



Australian Psychosocial Alliance

Improving NDIS Service Agreements Consultation

March 2026

About the Australian Psychosocial Alliance

The Australian Psychosocial Alliance (APA) is Flourish Australia, Mind Australia (incorporating One Door Mental Health and The Haven Foundation), Neami National, Ruah Community Support, Stride Mental Health, Open Minds and Wellways Australia. We are seven of the largest and longest service specialist providers of community managed mental health and wellbeing services in Australia. We provide support to over 110,000 people with mental health challenges and psychosocial disability every year. This includes expert support to around 5,800 NDIS participants with a psychosocial disability. We come together around a shared policy agenda to improve outcomes for people with mental ill-health and psychosocial disability, and a shared understanding of quality service delivery.

Our members deliver Medicare Mental Health Centres, headspace programs, carer connect centres, step-up step-down services (sub-acute, short-term residential care), residential rehabilitation, supported housing, employment, suicide prevention and postvention programs, individual mental health recovery support and NDIS supports. We respond across the spectrum of need and to people in priority populations, such as LGBTIQ+ individuals, culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) communities, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, young people and people experiencing or at risk of homelessness.

We combine evidence-based practice with service delivery wisdom to provide recovery-oriented services that support people to build their capacity to participate in society and manage their lives. We focus on personal goals, participation and living a meaningful life. This can include support to sustain a tenancy, build the skills to live independently, find fulfilling work and build social connections.

Our organisations embed lived experience across our governance and service delivery. We employ a specialist cross disciplinary workforce with expertise in mental health and psychosocial disability, and with the technical skills to deliver recovery-focused, trauma-informed and person-centred support.



1. Introduction

The APA welcomes the opportunity to respond to the Improving Service Agreements consultation.

We note that this project aims to:

1. Explore the guidance and materials which could support clearer and easier to understand service agreements.
2. Support fair, safe, and respectful relationships between participants, nominees, and providers.

2. Responses to key questions

(a) What participants and nominees find confusing?

- A lot of the confusion stems from service agreements that use overly complex or inconsistent language, particularly around rights, responsibilities, pricing and cancellation terms.
- Due to the issues that need to be covered in Service Agreements, these issues can also become lengthy and hard to understand. Many participants with psychosocial disability find it hard to understand what supports are actually included, what flexibility exists, and what happens when their circumstances shift particularly where capacity fluctuates over time or during periods of distress.
- A clearer, plain-language approach would make agreements much easier to navigate.

(b) What creates delays or extra administration?

- Delays often occur when agreements require repeated clarification about scope of service, billing rules, or how changes in a participant's needs affect the agreement.
- This is especially pronounced when agreements are not aligned with NDIA guidance and need bespoke interpretation.
- For psychosocial support, the lack of clarity around flexible service delivery contributes to additional administration for both participants and staff.
- If a signed agreement is required, there can be delays due to securing physical signatures, including those of appointed Guardians, which can then delay commencement of supports.
- If multiple supports by different providers are required communication between parties can take a long time.
- When a Support Co-ordinator is involved extra time is required to negotiate the Service Agreement, and can be further delayed when the Support Co-ordinator is inexperienced in understanding different pricing e.g., public holidays.

(c) Sections that are hard to explain or put into practice?

- Explaining participant rights, escalation pathways, variable pricing structures, and nuances like non-face-to-face charges is often challenging.
- These areas are difficult to translate into everyday language, and participants with fluctuating capacity can find them overwhelming.

- In psychosocial contexts, it is particularly tricky to reflect fluctuating needs in a static document, highlighting the importance of built in flexibility and review points.
- Unit pricing and line-item numbers and annual costs for weekly or daily supports are complex for people to understand.

(d) What information helps set clear expectations?

- Clear information about cancellation information helps set clear expectations around when we will or will not charge for cancelled supports.
- Clarity comes from simple explanations of what supports will be delivered, how changes are handled, clear responsibilities, transparent pricing, and well-defined escalation pathways.
- Participants consistently indicate they feel more confident when agreements provide these elements in straightforward, accessible terms.
- Practical examples are especially helpful in setting expectations.

(e) What would make service agreements easier for both providers and participants?

- **Simplicity:** Simplified templates, plain-English wording, and alignment between NDIA and the NDIS Quality and Safeguards Commission would reduce confusion and variability across the sector.
- **Flexibility:** A more person-centred structure—particularly with optional sections tailored for people with psychosocial disability - would make agreements more meaningful.
- **Digital, interactive formats** could streamline onboarding and reduce administrative burden.
- To be able to create an extension or addendum to a Service Agreement rather than a whole new Service Agreement when change is required.
- Have a Service Agreement that provides space to record funding quarters.

3. Further information

For any clarification or further information please contact Kate Paterson, Policy and Engagement Advisor, Australian Psychosocial Alliance, at Kate.Paterson@mindaustralia.org.au.

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