

# NDIS UTILISATION PROJECT

This summary presents the key issues shared during yarns with Victorian **First Nations participants**.

## DESIGN OF THE NDIS

Participants felt there had not been enough consultation with individuals, communities and organisations representing First Nations in the original design of the NDIS. This meant that First Nations participants often had more difficulty:

- Accessing culturally appropriate information and support to understand and navigate the NDIS.
- Gathering the required evidence to gain access to the NDIS.
- Trusting that the NDIS would be able to help them, making people hesitant to access the NDIS.

Participants highlighted the need for more (diverse) First Nations-led organisations, advocates and workers to help bridge gaps between individuals, communities and the NDIS, as well as supporting participants to access and benefit from the Scheme.

## YARNING WITH FRONTLINE WORKERS

NDIS frontline workers didn't always understand that culture and disability are often interwoven, and the NDIS processes don't always allow for cultural ways of yarning and sharing experiences.

"She was lovely. She listened to me. We had a yarn like, wasn't like 20 questions you know. It was just asking me about what I did, what Bub liked and didn't like. Where I'm struggling. Since then I only speak to her. She won't let the local [NDIS] mob near it. When I didn't want to be NDIS managed she looked around for a good plan manager for me. She even worded them up on how to yarn with me".

**Study participant**

These issues meant plans didn't always reflect the disability and cultural needs and priorities, making them harder to use.

Participants also felt frontline workers didn't provide them with enough support to understand how to start using their plans or the different ways it could be managed.

When participants did have positive, culturally supportive and ongoing engagement with knowledgeable frontline workers, they often felt more confident to use and manage their own plans.

## MEETING DISABILITY AND CULTURAL NEEDS

First Nations participants were often frustrated that they weren't allowed to use plans in a way that would best help them address their needs.

Another big issue was the lack of First Nations- led services and disability support workers, especially as they didn't always feel comfortable or culturally safe engaging with non-Indigenous workers.

This was a real issue for participants wanting to get involved in cultural events or spend time on country, and made it difficult to use plans.

When culturally sensitive supports and workers were available, First Nations participants were able to use their plans to promote their independence and enhance links with culture and community.

"I would love to see a hub set up in every city and town where there are our mob, so that they can go and get all the stuff done in the one place. It's safe, they see other parents with kids. Show families that disability isn't shame job. That we have our own leaders and mentors that help us out and get paid for it. It would be good to have a great hub that allows us mob to go there to get the assessments done all at once. That the hub is disability only for us mob. Health services are for medical needs. We need them too. But unless Bub is sick, I don't go there. It's just done wrong way for us. Us mob need our own place and space to go and sort it out that is only about disability for us mob".

**Study participant**

## CONTACT US.

This research was commissioned by the Victorian Department of Health and Human Services and implemented by researchers from the University of Melbourne's Melbourne Disability Institute and the Melbourne School of Population and Global Health, and Ms Jody Barney, Independent Indigenous Research Consultant.

All images used throughout this report are attributed to Artist, Graham Laming - licensed by The Melbourne Disability Institute.

**For more information contact:**  
alexandra.devine@unimelb.edu.au  
jody@deaficc.com.au  
md-i@unimelb.edu.au