

# THE NATIONAL DISABILITY INSURANCE SCHEME (NDIS) AND DEDIFFERENTIATION



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The National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) is recognised as the largest transformational social policy change since Medicare, and promises to deliver improved social and economic participation to almost 460,000 people with disability across Australia. The NDIS is a national scheme built on 3 pillars - insurance, participant choice and control and the community and mainstream services. In its conceptualisation, the scheme is reflective of principles of dedifferentiation. Dedifferentiation of design and implementation focused on a system built for all, and a one size will fit all to access and participate in the scheme in the same manner and process.

During the past six years since the Productivity Commission Report was released, the translation of the NDIS into legislation, policy and practice has generated different realisations which had different implications and unintended consequences for cohorts of people with disability. The National Disability Insurance Agency

and Governments have responded with reviews and a commitment to working with people with all the stakeholders. The intent is to arrive at operational procedures that deliver access and outcomes for all eligible participants.

The Queensland State Government has invested in a range of readiness projects and initiatives delivered by non-government organisations over the past 4-5 years to assist people with disability, families and carers and the service sector to transition to the NDIS. Queenslanders with Disability Network (QDN) is an organisation by and for people with disability. The organisation has a diverse membership base including people with physical, intellectual, neurological, sensory, and psychosocial disability. QDN has been one of the organisations funded to do this participant readiness work during this time. QDN's values are centred on inclusion, equal citizenship and a voice for people with disability. QDN members regularly provide feedback and raise issues and experiences to inform big picture policy and lead and influence change that delivers on the organisation's mission and vision.

People with intellectual disability were identified by QDN members as a group that could potentially miss out and be left behind, along with experiencing some of the unintended consequences of NDIS transition. QDN's projects and big picture policy work as a result have focused on work to contribute to better outcomes and access to the NDIS for people with intellectual disability and other groups who experience additional disadvantage. One of QDN's participant readiness projects is "Ready to go." The project has included the development of peer leaders (a group of people with intellectual disability) to co-design and co-deliver workshops, engagement activities and information by and for people with intellectual disability and their supporters. This project has delivered workshops to over 7000 people across Queensland and is an example of the tension between differentiation and dedifferentiation in policy and practice. It is critical that policy debate around dedifferentiation vs differentiation within the NDIS comes back to the fundamental principle of ensuring all eligible people with disability can enter via a pathway that enables them approved access to the scheme and delivers them opportunities for meaningful and active participation.