

Building capacity and reducing vulnerability for people in closed systems

- The National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) has a responsibility to all participants to support their independence and social and economic participation. Building capacity and reducing vulnerability is key to the achievement of this goal and for the sustainability of the Scheme.
- Many people who live and spend their day in closed systems have little access to support to build capacity. In the context of the constraints of closed systems, many have an increased need for more intensive support.
- What does the NDIS need to do?

The NDIS needs to close the gap between participants in closed systems and other participants to facilitate positive outcomes for all and mitigate risks to Scheme sustainability.

The NDIS has a clear responsibility to support all participants achieve positive outcomes:

Criteria for success:

- Participants in closed systems have increased belief in themselves, increased self-worth, increased friends and informal support.
- Participants in closed systems are less vulnerable with:
 - increased control over day to day and larger life decisions.
 - more interaction with people not paid to provide support.
 - less time spent in services that congregate them and separate them from community.
- The system is more responsive to participants in closed systems including:
 - less exposure to casual staff.
 - options that enable people to choose where they live, who they live with and who supports them.

However, participants in closed systems:

- Have depleted enablers of an ordinary life (relationships, a sense of belonging, individual autonomy, decision-making, engagement in the community, ability to use their strengths for a challenge and to contribute).
- Experience vulnerabilities arising from:
 - systemic factors such as poverty, unemployment, inadequate housing, stigma, marginalisation, discrimination and perverse power imbalances.
 - exposure to an unresponsive system, lack of participation in decision-making, lack of voice in the complaints system, having behaviours of concern, lack of speech and multiple impairments.
 - spending all their time in other people with disability and little interaction with people not paid to provide support.

So the NDIS needs to take the following steps to close the gap:

1. Prioritising support to build capacity and reduce vulnerability of participants who live and spend their day in closed systems.
2. Providing reasonable and necessary support to enable participants in closed systems to:
 - a) develop personal safeguards including support to plan and implement safeguards; develop self-advocacy skills and reduce the risk of abuse and neglect.
 - b) build capacity especially where participants unable to identify areas for growth.
 - c) improve decision-making skills of participants and supporters.
3. Ensuring that additional requirements are included in NDIS Frameworks including:
 - a) Reference Packages.
 - b) the Outcomes Framework.
 - c) the capacity of NDIA staff and Partners to understand vulnerability and allocate resources to strengthen safeguards, mitigate risk, facilitate the building of capacity and support for decision-making.