

THE ADVOCATE

Your aged care and disability advocacy news, 15 April 2026

Contact us: 1800 700 600

Message from the CEO

We need to restore balance in the NDIS conversation.

As we approach the Federal Budget in May, the cost of the NDIS is taking up significant media headline air. The hyperboles are out - “out of control”, “off track”, “runaway spending”, “Rolls Royce scheme”.

I sometimes wonder if it's how we now think and talk about the NDIS that's out of control?

I worry that the NDIS has become a one-sided conversation about fiscal burden and rorting, with the importance and benefits of the scheme for hundreds and thousands of Australians, AND the economy, becoming a byline.

I do understand that cost and affordability of the NDIS is a key concern for all of us, especially given current cost of living and housing issues. The NDIS is one of our biggest expenditures, costing around \$50 billion and the annual growth rate is at 10%. The government plan is to reduce the growth rate of the scheme to 5-6%, starting with 8% by July 2026.

But what we are not seeing is any economic modelling for costs on the other side of the equation. What happens to people with disability who will now not be eligible for the NDIS, or who can't access the support they need following cuts to their support plans?

Our advocates are seeing that largely it's the emergency, health, mental health and sometimes aged care systems picking up the tab.

Then there are broader costs for the economy – children not going to school, carers not getting back to work, people with disability not in work, or people not getting out in their communities.

These are not abstract consequences. They are measurable social and economic costs - just shifted off one balance sheet and onto others.

It seems the plan for creating sustainability in the NDIS is largely based on rationalising access to the scheme and cuts to funding for supports. In January 2026, almost a third of participants in the NDIS whose plans had been reassessed since May 2025 have had their total support packages cut, by an average of 22.5 per cent.



This is having real and significant consequences. In this edition of The Advocate, our disability advocates share the NDIS issues that they are seeing and where greater efforts for making the scheme more sustainable could be made.

The future of Disability Advocacy

One thing is clear. The demand for disability advocacy has skyrocketed, and under the current program there is significant unmet demand.

The [consultation report](#) on the new Commonwealth disability advocacy program has just been released. The key findings include longer-term funding for service continuity, open competitive funding and the impacts of this on some existing local organisations, advocacy awareness, clearer eligibility and workforce development.

However, I think more consideration needs to be given to **funding for need, complexity, and psychosocial disadvantage**. People seeking advocacy support are increasingly facing complex, high-risk situations that require intensive, sustained assistance - often closer to a case management model than traditional advocacy. Funding must recognise and support this reality. These cases will only increase, and these are the people who need support the most.

With the new national Independent Disability Advocacy Program (IDAP) due to commence in February 2027, and a transition period beginning in November 2026, time is limited. Clear detail on the new program is needed soon.

Yarn'n Strong self-advocacy for mob with disability

Our Yarn'n Strong program is now in full swing. Yarn'n Strong, *Your Voice, Your Choice*, is giving Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people with disability knowledge and confidence to speak up and be heard.

We are working with local partners Gallang Place, to provide the program in greater Brisbane, and Central Queensland Indigenous Development (CQID) to provide the program in Central Queensland. The program is being guided by an Advisory Panel of community Elders and leaders who had their first meeting last week. Thank you Aunty Semah Mokak-Wischki, Uncle Willie Prince and Cody Skinner for your cultural guidance - we are pleased to be collaborating with you on this new program.

We also welcomed Mike Salbro to the ADA Australia team who will be running the program in Cherbourg. An update on Yarn'n Strong is included in this edition.

Until next time.

Geoff Rowe

NDIS issues and insights

Our advocates are seeing that recent changes to the NDIS and ongoing administrative issues, have created uncertainty and stress for many participants.

Dealing with the NDIS

- In some instances, advocates have seen support plans drastically cut by 50%. This is resulting in disruptions to essential supports such as personal care, therapy and community participation, and an increasing reliance on family and informal supports which brings its own pressure and financial strains for carers.
- We have seen people end up in hospital following cuts to plans. Sometimes there are just no other options.
- Delays in decisions or reviews and lost paperwork and applications.
- The access process has continued to become increasingly complex with a requirement for specialist assessments and reports, which excludes many people who cannot afford or access these reports.
- Access and planning difficulties are then compounded by a lack of a direct line of enquiry. Often there is no one to call if you have questions.



The impact of these changes are not felt equally. People with psychosocial disability, living alone, in regional or remote areas, who are homeless, or without strong informal or advocacy support are often the most affected. Language, digital access, trauma and poverty make it even harder to navigate an increasingly complex system.

There is also a big gap in foundational supports for people with complex medical conditions that do not meet the permanency requirements to access the NDIS, but are on waitlists for health support.

Providers

We know the majority of providers are doing the right thing and delivering quality services, however, aside from the investigations of fraud, our advocates are seeing that there are issues around managing funding well, provider charges and complex clients. Fixing these would go a long way to resolving some key NDIS issues.

- Not managing support plan funds well, and because of it people run out of money. For example, using physiotherapy when perhaps less costly exercise therapy would be suitable.
- We still also see some providers charging more under the NDIS than perhaps their usual standard rates.
- Unwillingness to take on clients with complex needs, often citing inadequate capacity, but generally is viewed with a cost-benefit lens.

What would help

- A simplified access process, considering people with psychosocial or intellectual disability, or who may be at risk of homelessness. We know that there is concern around the new NDIS assessment tool, and we don't want to see 'robo-planning' but if there is a silver lining, it might be to help those who have faced barriers to obtaining specialist reports and evidence.
- Better contact points for following up applications, paper work and decisions.
- Greater obligation for providers to provide services to clients with complex needs.
- Better support coordination.
- Greater focus on upholding 'fair pricing' by the NDIS Quality and Safeguards Commission.
- Finalising the plan for foundational supports and getting them in place, so there are options for support outside of the NDIS.

Yarn'n Strong

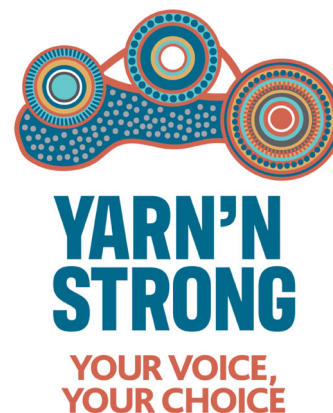
In September last year we announced Yarn'n Strong - a new self-advocacy program to help build knowledge, skills and confidence of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people with disability when it comes to speaking up for their rights and needs when accessing community or disability services.

The team have been busy establishing the program - developing tools and resources, operational processes and most importantly engaging with the community to raise awareness of the program and what it hopes to achieve.

The Yarn'n Strong partners are ready and available to help mob with disability start building their skills and confidence to be heard.

- Learn more about your rights as a person living with disability
- Learn how to manage issues with the NDIS or your disability support services
- Learn how to ask for what you want and have say in your life

The program is free, open to anyone with disability and their families and carers, and you do not need to have an NDIS plan to participate.



Gallang Place Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Corporation

Gallang Place was formed in 1994 to respond to a need for services with an Indigenous focus to improve the emotional and social well being and mental health for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the Brisbane area. Today Gallang Place provides a range of counselling, advocacy and support services for mob, with a deep respect for rights, culture, history and community.

Gallang Place Yarn'n Strong advocates are organising local activities for people in:

- Caboolture
- Cleveland
- Stradbroke Island
- Springwood
- Kingston
- Ipswich

Get in touch if you would like to join or refer someone to the program - yarnnstrong@gallangplace.org.au, phone 07 3899 5041.



Central Queensland Indigenous Development (CQID)

CQID has been dedicated to empowering Indigenous individuals, families and communities across regional Queensland for more than 20 years. CQID deliver a large portfolio of services across family, housing, mental health, youth, alcohol & drugs and domestic violence, and have long been advocates for Indigenous children and families.

CQID Yarn'n Strong advocates are organising local activities for people with disability in:

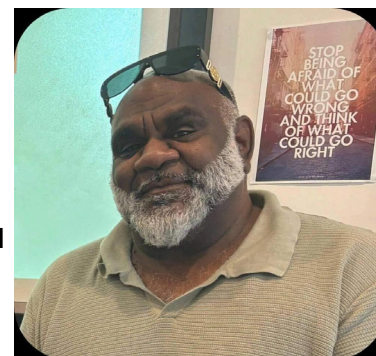
- Rockhampton
- Central Highlands
- Bundaberg
- Hervey Bay
- Maryborough

Get in touch if you would like to join or refer someone to the program - yarnnstrong@cqid.com.au, phone 1800 000 307.

Meet Mike Salbro, Cherbourg

Wadamolli (Hello in Birri/Wiri language in the Bowen/Mackay region)

Mike is my name and I'm a proud Wakka Wakka, Wiri, Bigambul and Yugera man from Cherbourg. I grew up all my life living in Sweden and my super power is that I can speak fluent Swedish.



I'm a father of two sons (15 & 19 yrs) and have worked in the community sector for 24 years. I'm really looking forward to being able with help people with disability in Cherbourg learn more about their rights as a person living with disability, how to manage issues with the NDIS or other services and build the confidence to ask for what you want and have a say in your life.

After work you can find me watching 4WD/Camping shows, and I love a good horror movie....followed by a standup comedy 😊

Get in touch with Mike if you, or someone you know, is interested in the program - mike.salbro@adaaustralia.com.au, phone 07 3637 6023.

Our new Words 2 Action website is now live!

We're excited to announce the launch our brand-new Words 2 Action website – a hub for learning how to better deal with and get through the hoops and hurdles of the systems that are there to support you.

Download the ACT Planner, designed to help you prioritise and move forward with a plan, alongside a range of practical tools and resources.

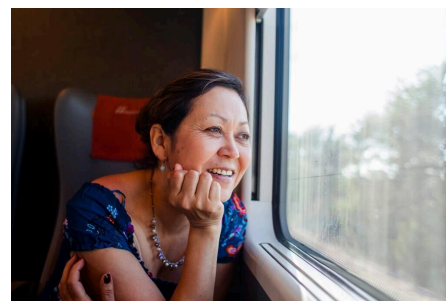
Visit www.words2action.com.au



Make rail journey planning accessible

Queensland Rail is improving its journey planning information so people with accessibility needs can make informed decisions about whether travelling by train is safe, suitable and practical.

People with disability and their supporters are invited to take part in a short 15 minute [survey](#) to share their thoughts.



The survey closes **Monday 20 April**. Participants can choose to go into the draw to win one of ten \$50 gift cards.



(Photo: Redlands City Council website)

More support for Southern Moreton Bay Islands

ADA Australia is providing more support for seniors across the Southern Moreton Bay Islands, with an Island-based Community Connector/Aged Care advocate and a Community Navigator - Tina Farrimond and Jose Nicholson.

Tina and Jose are providing on-the-ground support to seniors on the islands to help them understand and access aged, health, social and community services, and also to resolve any issues they are having with their aged care.



We would like to thank [SeaLink](#) for their support in getting Tina and Jose around the islands. Their support means more help for more people.

Contact us on 1800 818 338.

If you would like a printable copy, please visit www.adaaustralia.com.au or email info@adaaustralia.com.au

ADA Australia

121 Copperfield St, Geebung QLD 4034

Aged Care Advocacy Line: 1800 700 600

Website: <https://adaaustralia.com.au/>