

Why Foundational Supports for Adults Cannot Wait

Australia's disability support system is undergoing significant reform. Governments have agreed to introduce Foundational Supports, a new layer of assistance for people with disability outside the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS), alongside broader changes intended to improve the sustainability of the NDIS.

ACIA Chief Executive Officer said the success of these reforms depends on one critical factor:

"Foundational Supports for adults must be established before the full impact of NDIS reforms is realised."

The original vision of the NDIS was never to provide support for every person with disability. Rather, it was intended to sit within a broader ecosystem of services that would support Australians whose needs do not meet NDIS eligibility requirements. The Independent Review of the NDIS found that these broader supports are often fragmented, difficult to access, or unavailable altogether, leaving many people without meaningful assistance and creating pressure on the NDIS itself.

Governments have recognised this challenge. The Australian Government has again confirmed that all governments have agreed to work together to deliver Foundational Supports, including general supports available to all people with disability and targeted supports for people with additional support needs who do not require the NDIS. The National Agreement includes joint government funding of \$10 billion over five years.

This investment is important, but timing matters.

As NDIS reforms continue to tighten the focus of the scheme, more people may find themselves relying on support systems outside the NDIS. If Foundational Supports are not fully operational when this occurs, Australians with disability could face gaps in assistance that affect their independence, community participation and wellbeing. The NDIS Review highlighted that the absence of appropriate non-NDIS supports contributes to poorer outcomes and places additional strain on the broader disability system.

The consequences extend beyond the disability sector. When people cannot access appropriate support early, demand often shifts to other systems, including health care, mental health services, housing and homelessness services, and the justice sector. Well-designed Foundational Supports have the potential to reduce these pressures by providing practical assistance before needs escalate.

Equally important is the need for a consistent quality framework.

It has become increasingly clear within the NDIS service delivery environment that established quality and safeguarding systems that include provider standards, regulatory oversight and consumer protections are necessary. These arrangements are intended to ensure participants receive safe and high-quality services.

Outside the NDIS, quality requirements vary considerably depending on the funding source. As a result, Australians receiving similar types of support may experience very different levels of oversight and protection. This inconsistency becomes particularly important as governments develop Foundational Supports, which are expected to serve large numbers of people who are not NDIS participants.

Introducing Foundational Supports without a quality framework would risk creating a two-tiered system, where access to safeguards depends on how support is funded rather than on an individual's needs. Embedding quality requirements from the outset would help ensure consistency, accountability and public confidence while protecting some of Australia's most vulnerable citizens.

The disability reform agenda presents a once-in-a-generation opportunity to create a genuinely connected system of support. To achieve that goal, governments must ensure that Foundational Supports for adults are available before people are transitioned out of, or prevented from entering, the NDIS. Just as importantly, those supports should operate within an overarching quality framework that guarantees safety, accountability and quality regardless of funding source.

ACIA is calling for:

- Foundational Supports for adults to be available before people are transitioned out of, or prevented from entering, the NDIS.
- An overarching quality framework that guarantees safety, accountability and quality regardless of funding source.
- Consistent standards so every Australian can trust that support is delivered safely and to a high standard.

“Every Australian with disability should have access to appropriate support, and every Australian should be able to trust that support is delivered to a consistent standard.”

ENDS

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Source note: Prepared using Australian Government Department of Health, Disability and Ageing, Foundational Supports for People with Disability (updated 20 August 2026); Independent Review of the NDIS, Foundational Supports for All People with Disability Fact Sheet; Australian Government, NDIS Quality and Safeguarding Framework; NDIS Quality and Safeguards Commission, NDIS Practice Standards; Australian Community Industry Alliance, Submission to the NSW Parliamentary Inquiry – Foundational Supports (8 July 2026).