

Health Minister Mark Butler's Address to the National Press Club

21 August 2025

At the National Press Club on Wednesday 20 August 2025, the Minister for Disability and the National Disability Insurance Scheme Mark Butler announced that the Federal Government will provide \$2 billion to fund a new program called *Thriving Kids*. Minister Butler also announced additional reforms to the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS). The *Thriving Kids* program is designed to divert hundreds of thousands of children with mild to moderate developmental delays and autism away from the NDIS by mid-2027.

Minister Butler outlined the two major challenges impacting the NDIS: achieving financial sustainability and returning the scheme to its core purpose of supporting individuals with significant, permanent care needs. Minister Butler affirmed that meeting these challenges will prioritise the interests and choice of people with a disability, highlighting the Government's intention of staying true to the promise of 'nothing about us without us.'

Budget Sustainability

In his address, Minister Butler outlined the current rate of growth and expense of the National Disability Insurance Scheme. Originally intended to support 410,000 people, the scheme now supports almost 740,000 and is forecasted to grow to a million by 2034. He also highlighted that the Scheme was growing at a rate of 22% per year, well above the rates of aged care and Medicare which are projected to grow by 5% per year.

Minister Butler revealed that National Cabinet's target to reduce growth of the Scheme to 8% by 2026 will cost the Budget \$105 billion and will increase the share of GDP by 0.5% in the coming decade. Minister Butler aims to achieve a growth rate of 5-6% annually in the long-term and introduce pricing discipline without adversely affecting the scheme.

Minister Butler also spoke on the continued problem of fraud and integrity within the Scheme. The Government has invested \$500 million to build the NDIA's capacity to identify and prevent fraud against the NDIS, however the Scheme still has issues with provider registration, with 15 out of 16 providers acting unregistered and with little oversight.

The Government has launched the NDIS Reform Advisory Committee to drive collaboration between Government and the Sector, and advise on ongoing reforms to the scheme, including the response to the NDIS review and Disability Royal Commission.

Thriving Kids

Minister Butler highlighted the purpose of the NDIS is to support those with a significant and permanent disability, and that overall, the Scheme's growth has stabilised around original projections in all areas but one, children with developmental delay or autism.

Minister Butler outlined the current rate of growth for children in the NDIS, with just under half of participants in the Scheme under the age of 15, a share that continues to grow according to the latest quarterly report. As well as this, half the new entrants to the scheme are under the age of 9, and most have developmental delay or autism, and enter the scheme through the early intervention stream.

The *Thriving Kids* program is designed to deliver foundational supports for these children, diverting them from the NDIS to improve sustainability and align with its original intent. National Cabinet has agreed to share the funding of this program equally between the States and the Commonwealth. Once fully rolled out, NDIS access and eligibility will change. Current and newly enrolled children will remain on the NDIS under usual arrangements.

A \$2 billion provision in the previous Budget has been made by the Commonwealth for *Thriving Kids* aiming to lead its design by adapting existing systems and infrastructure. The program and access changes to the NDIS is set to commence in mid-2027.

Minister Butler will oversee consultations with various stakeholders, including communities, state governments, service providers and parents to decide how to best invest the provision. This process will be co-chaired by Frank Oberklaid AM, a paediatrician and childhood development expert.

Further information

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See the Minister's full address the National Press Club [here](#).

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