

I am an adult with high functioning autism and am a participant in the NDIS. Under scope in cost drivers, it has been my experience that any unusual or rarely asked for supports are given a blanket No, without thought. The participant and their supporters then have to battle through the No, to get to the real answer. This then increases the load felt by participants and decreases the likelihood of asking for other needed supports, which then means supports are needed further into the future, then otherwise could have been. This was the case when I asked for driving lessons. I do not learn in the same way as most people, in fact in the opposite. This meant that HOW I was taught is extremely important. My mother did not have the capacity to teach me herself. I needed a professional instructor who had experience teaching someone like me. I would not have my p plates now if this did not happen. I have then driven to places like Sydney, Cootamundra, and northern NSW to teach other communities what I have learnt about the NDIS. This has increased my job prospects, ability to participate in the community and my self esteem. I am no longer scared of the community but am now within it. If you take this into account, getting driving lessons IS a reasonable and necessary support in some cases.

While the planning process is valid, it is also very rushed, stressful, resulting plans are different to the discussion, so therefore can be unclear. The planners can have a great impact both positive and negative on the resulting plans. The planners' biases also have an impact on both the discussion and resulting plan of a participant. For two years, the planner I had, put me in a box and thought she knew what and how I wanted supports. She would not listen until I had a panic attack in the meeting. It was only then she started listening. This made me very uneasy and scared of the planning process itself.

In the vast majority of cases, the criteria for supports are clear and effective and there are sufficient guidelines for assessors in how these supports should be applied. However, there is little to no understanding or ability to empathise and tailor the supports when unusual needs pop up. This places undue stress and the need to prove themselves to the NDIS on the participants themselves. It can mean that in some cases that improper plans are being utilised by participants that do not meet their needs. It increases the likelihood that these improper plans would need to be reviewed earlier, and the participant does not have the outcomes that they could have. An easy way to address this is giving the planners the ability to suggest needed supports if they can see that the participant would need it. Under the current rules this is not allowed.

The greatest factor that I have seen with support workers is the introduction of staff matching with participants. This means that the personality of the worker and the matching of likes and interests are more important than experience or qualifications. Qualifications can always be taught, but the professional friendship between support worker and participant and the want to be there cannot. This impacts the cost effectiveness of the scheme, as a participant who feels secure with the support worker will have much better outcomes and the worker will be much more efficient at their job. It also means that a far greater diversity of workers will be needed.

As carers age, their ability to prepare for the NDIS diminishes. They do not have the energy or drive that they once had. This increases the likelihood of improper plans resulting for participants. This means that there will be a need for more formal carers as the carers themselves need care. Plans will need to be put into place for this transition.