

Defend our Jobs and Living Standards Against Attacks

22. NDIS

1. The National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) is the largest social reform in Australia since the introduction of Medicare. The NDIS is intended to facilitate increased participation by people with disabilities in all facets of society and life, including the workforce, and to significantly improve their access to support. It is estimated that one in five of all new jobs created in Australia during the scheme's rollout to 2021 will be NDIS related. The NDIS represents a new model of service delivery, where funding follows the service user who has choice and control in the delivery of their supports. However, this contestable funding model risks increasing employment insecurity for the disability support workforce and requires significant attention.
2. Congress recognises that quality care and support for people with disabilities is being undermined by poor staff pay and conditions. Congress supports the vital work performed by all workers in the disability sector and notes that quality care and support can only be delivered by a workforce that has access to fair wages and decent working conditions.
3. Congress supports the introduction of a disability sector workforce development strategy (WDS) that addresses a number of workforce issues including: career progression, attraction and retention, training and education, worker regulation and provider accreditation, and best practice disability support management. It is essential that unions play a central role in the development of a disability sector WDS.
4. Congress notes with concern the low and capped prices of the NDIS and the negative impact they have on the wages and conditions of the disability workforce. Congress supports NDIS prices that meet the true costs of quality service delivery. NDIS price-setting must be transparent and informed by current research that recognises the link between work performed, industrial settings and quality outcomes for people with a disability. Prices need to ensure that minimum industrial benchmarks are met, allow scope for bargaining above minimum industrial standards and accommodate meaningful career structures for disability support workers. Both NDIS prices and the key features of the scheme's design must not increase the prevalence of insecure work by allowing for enhanced job security through increased use of ongoing modes of employment.
5. Congress affirms that any worker providing disability supports funded through the NDIS—including those directly employed by NDIS participants—is deemed to be covered by the relevant industry Award as a minimum.
6. In order to safeguard quality support, maintain best practice and enhance professionalisation, a nationally consistent disability workforce registration and accreditation scheme should be established. This must comprise the following elements:

pre-employment screening; mandated minimum qualifications; ongoing professional development; and worker registration. A regulatory framework establishing minimum standards and benchmarks for providers should also be developed to ensure quality and sustainable outcomes for people with disabilities.

7. Congress supports the development and enhancement of skill levels and continuing professional development of the workforce by ensuring access to quality, relevant and ongoing training.
8. The improvements that will be delivered by the NDIS must not be used as an excuse by State and Territory Governments to privatise their existing disability support systems and abrogate their duty of care to people with disabilities. By retaining a role in the direct delivery of disability services, people with disabilities will have more choice of providers to meet their needs. Jobs must be safeguarded, and rates of pay, conditions, entitlements and transfer payments for staff who move to a non-government provider must be guaranteed.