



NDIS Quality
and Safeguards
Commission

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Quality and Consumer
Information Insight Report:
Provider Quality

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Table of Contents

NDIS Quality and Safeguards Commission.....	1
Provider quality is about a culture of continuous improvement, training and values	3
Key Insights	3
Registration leads to a higher level of trust, better governance but the quality of service is often mixed	4
There are clear features of quality organisations.....	6
Terms and Definitions.....	8

Provider quality is about a culture of continuous improvement, training and values

'Quality' can be defined as the extent to which a support, that is delivered by a provider, meets or exceeds a participant's needs, expectations and outcomes, and how it meets or exceeds the relevant NDIS requirements. Participants' choices, preferences, and feedback shape the NDIS market, driving diversity, innovation, and quality improvements.

Ensuring that supports are safe and of high quality is important to the everyday quality of life of participants, yet the provision of quality support is a complex process influenced by multiple interrelated factors.

Key Insights

Provider quality is about a culture of continuous improvement, training and values

- Participants told us providers that provide high quality services have sound governance processes in place, care about their clients, and create a positive organisation culture. This includes being communicative, transparent with information and decisions, and creating opportunities for meaningful feedback.
- Participants felt providers that provide high quality services are action orientated, follow through with what they say, and make sure the participant's needs come first. This included being responsive to individual cultural needs.
- Participants share that registered providers have undergone a vetting process; this often translates into a higher level of trust and accountability.
- Participants felt services should be more flexible and recognise the need for supporting participants with social activities to promote independence.
- Providers are eager to improve on the quality of their supports and services, requesting constructive feedback from the NDIS Commission.
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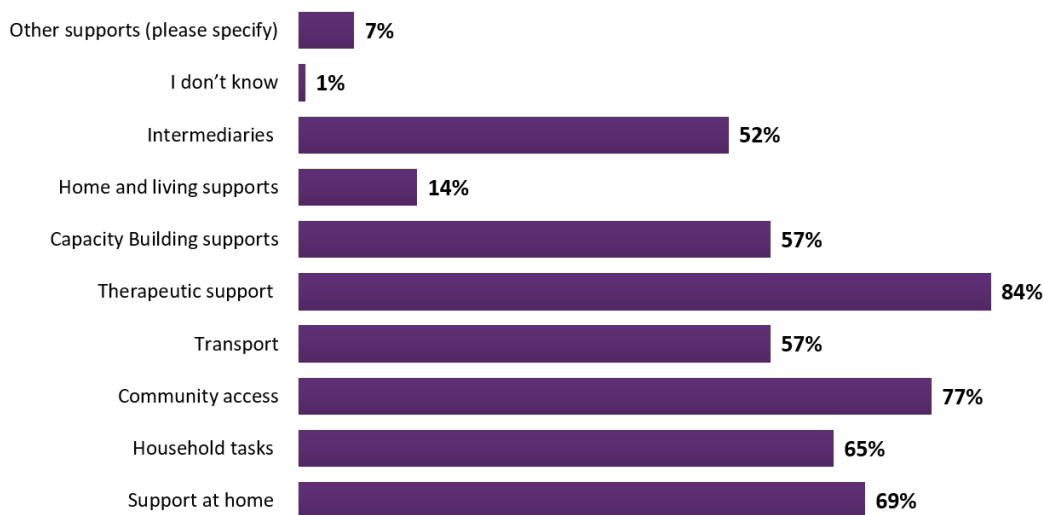
Provider definition

In this report, we have used the word 'provider' as a general description of any person or entity delivering NDIS services and supports to participants. We encountered a variety of service relationships and observed them to be varied (and sometimes complex). When participants told us about a 'provider' of services, this included workers considered as an employee; contractors; sub-contractors; casual employees; organisations; or sole proprietors

More terms and definitions used in the report can be found [here](#).

Participants who completed the survey were mostly receiving therapeutic supports and support in relation to community access and in the home.

Types of services or supports participants receive from NDIS providers



Those who selected the 'other' option spoke about receiving supports such as employment, assistive technology, home modifications and consumables.

Registration leads to a higher level of trust, better governance but the quality of service is often mixed

Most participants shared they were not fully informed about the benefits, risks and differences that may be involved in the choices around engaging registered and unregistered providers for particular categories of supports. While participants often expressed a desire for better regulation of NDIS providers and minimum standards that may be provided through a registration and audit process, some participants did not find that the current process was ensuring that registration guaranteed high quality services.

“Registration means absolutely nothing. I ask for evidence of clearances anyway, the rest is box ticking - what is to gain.”

Participants identified some benefits of registered providers, who were typically larger organisations, including; having established operations and resources, which can provide stability in service delivery and a sense of security. They expressed that the security of having someone who oversees and provides support/supervision to workers provides an added layer of safety, which is more than a sole trader or unregistered provider can offer:

“There is no safety for participants and their families with unregistered providers.”

They also appreciated the diverse range of services that many registered providers offered, and the ability to access a broader spectrum of supports under one umbrella. Additionally, some participants told us that because registered providers have undergone a vetting process; this often translates into a higher level of trust, accountability, and provides a level of comfort:

“Every service should be NDIS registered or they should not be able to charge NDIS prices.”

Some participants felt there was a link between registration and larger providers. They felt that these providers had organisational cultures that disempowered people with disability, and were often motivated by funding. Some participants shared that the current registration process, as an accreditation system within the NDIS, is not achieving a differentiation between providers who deliver quality and those who do not but was instead a bureaucratic box-ticking exercise:

“The current Registered Provider accreditation system just advantages those providers with the financial resources to pay someone to get them through accreditation.”

Participants who chose unregistered providers often did so, as they were often smaller and provided flexibility and choice. Participants identified elements of practice that they wanted to see encouraged including; cultural safety, reflective practice and ongoing training. Factors for choosing unregistered providers included perceptions of better and more person-centred service, flexibility, innovation, social inclusion and improved cost effectiveness associated with using unregistered providers. However, many participants expressed a desire to have ‘minimum standard’ for all service providers and talked about a more tiered system of registration being a better fit for providers.

“It would be beneficial if all providers were registered but it needs to be affordable and achievable for small organisations.”

Participants who chose unregistered providers shared the need to take on a more active role in managing their supports and ensuring they meet requirements. As one participant shared their experience of using a smaller non-registered provider:

“I prefer to use non-registered supports. They are more directly responsive, less bureaucratic, do not cancel /swap supports around without notice like some large providers.”

For participants and their supporters, they told us there needs to be a stronger emphasis on the link between registration and quality. Participants shared that the distinction between registered and unregistered NDIS Providers is becoming less clear. Some participants shared they had not experienced quality services by NDIS providers regardless of whether a provider was registered or not:

“I have not had good support since becoming a participant. I have been shocked at the poor quality of service provision by multiple providers, medical focus, lack of experience working with complex disabilities, complete disregard for my dignity, rights and privacy.”

Participants are increasingly focused on the quality and relevance of services and supports regardless of their providers’ registration status. Of the participants who completed our survey, 48% said registration status was not important compared to 50% who said it was. Participants shared that they gravitate to services that align more closely with their individual needs and values. Participants emphasised the importance of participant-centric approaches and choice, balancing a need for flexibility and provider safeguards.

“Choice and control and agency. Registration has ruined how companies provide services. Put people first, taking months to sign up and contracts are not family or client protective this only protects the company.”

There are clear features of quality organisations

There are a number of distinctive features of what constitutes a ‘quality organisation’ that emerged from the consultations. These features directly linked to empowering participants.

Participant Focused

Participants told us that organisations that placed participants at the centre of their service delivery were viewed as quality. These organisations took the time to understand each participant’s unique goals and needs and shaped their services accordingly. This ensured supports were tailored and responsive:

“They are caring and genuinely wanting the best for the participant to improve their quality of life and to reach their goals.”

Action Orientated

Participants prefer organisations that are proactive and action-orientated – ‘getting things done’. They do not only follow a set of procedures; they also actively seek out opportunities to improve the services that they offer. They are committed to continuous improvement, whether it is related to service delivery, staff training, or accessibility. As one participant shared:

“When the support person/agency listens to me and does their best to make it all happen.”



Promote Agency and Foster Independence

Participants told us it was important to them for organisations to value participants’ lived experiences and see them as the experts of their disability. Such organisations actively work to empower participants by promoting their agency and self-determination. They provide the necessary tools and information to enable participants to take charge of their own lives and make informed decisions regarding their NDIS services. As one participant noted, this felt like:

“Being seen as a whole person rather than just a number or infantilized.”

Good Governance

Participants shared a key feature of quality was an organisation’s ability to maintain transparent and accountable governance structures. Their decision-making processes are clear and in the best interests of participants, and they operate with high ethical standards. An example of this from a participant was that organisations:

“Have policies and procedures in place for staff to follow to enable clients to build trust.”

Feedback Processes

Participants expressed that organisations can demonstrate that they ensure they will remain participant-focused through actively welcoming participants’ feedback. They have structured mechanisms for receiving, addressing and acting upon this feedback, which helps to create a culture of continuous improvement:

“Regular feedback provided and good communication of areas for improvement and areas of success.”

Continuity and Transitions

It is important to participants that organisations do not operate in isolation and understand the significance of seamless transitions for NDIS Participants. They have well-structured processes in place that are designed to minimise disruptions, ensure continuity of care, and help participants move smoothly between services:

“Continuity of service is extremely important including a WARM handover when workers change.”

Timely and Transparent Communication

Participants highly value organisations that prioritise clear and timely communication with participants and their supports and ensuring the participants are well-informed about all aspects of their services, including any changes or updates. As one participant expressed, it is important that organisations:

“Say what they mean and mean what they say.”

Responsive and Flexible

Participants want organisations to recognise that their individual needs and circumstances may change. Quality organisations exhibit flexibility in adjusting services accordingly. They adapt to the evolving needs of participants:

“Quality support is when someone is willing to adapt.”

Positive Culture

Participants value organisations that place emphasis on inclusion and supporting diversity. This positive culture extends to how participants are treated and supported. They foster a positive and supportive workplace culture and understand the link between this and quality. Staff are well trained, motivated, and committed to providing high quality care. One participant shared that:

“It is also important that providers pay workers well and train them well, choose them well (not just for individual participants, but in general as well) and treat them well.”

Culturally Responsive

Participants shared that organisations must recognise and respect the cultural diversity of the individuals they support through tailoring services to meet the unique cultural, linguistic and social needs of participants. This means removing language barriers, actively engaging with communities and ensuring all staff have an understanding of cultural norms, values, and traditions. This also means having the ability to communicate sensitively and respectfully:

“Understanding my cultural and values my culture matters, makes me feel safe.”

Represent Value

Participants expressed when organisations operate efficiently, it can help participants to ensure the services offered represent value for money. Participants can depend on them to consistently deliver services as agreed upon. This builds trust and confidence among participants and their support networks. They optimise resource allocation to maximise the impact of NDIS funding, resulting in participants receiving the most benefit for their budget:

“I need value for money. If providers give service that excels the cost, the provider is worth staying with.”

Terms and Definitions

Agency-managed participant: A participant whose NDIS funding is managed by the NDIA. Participants who choose to be Agency-Managed can only access supports and services from registered NDIS providers.

CALD: Refers to any person or group of people that are culturally and linguistically diverse.

Choice and control: A participant has the right to make their own decisions about what is important to them and to decide how they would like to receive their supports and who from.

Complaint: telling the NDIS Commission if you are unhappy with or have a concern about your current NDIS supports or services.

Confidence: a high level of trust. For example, you are confident your provider gives you correct information.

Consumer: see “participant”

Demographic information: Data about the features or characteristics that define an individual or group. For the purpose of the Own Motion Inquiry, this includes data such as location, age and disability type.

Dignity of Risk: is the right to make decisions about yourself and your supports including choosing to take risks.

Empowered: people having power and control over their own lives and confidence to make a decision.

Information: Knowledge provided to you or that you look for in relation to NDIS Supports.

Informed decision-making: have all the information and facts available related to the decision topic

Knowledge: Facts, truths, information provided to you or that you look for.

LGBTQIA+: Refers to a person’s sexual orientation and/or gender identity and is an abbreviation for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer (or questioning), intersex, and asexual (or allies), and more.

Market: A collection of providers offering products and services to NDIS participants. Also known as NDIS Market.

Misinformation: False or wrong information about the NDIS or NDIS services that is spread by accident or on purpose.

NDIS Market: The NDIS Market is the collective term for all Providers and Services available to NDIS Participants to purchase using their NDIS Plan funding.

NDIS participants: People with disability who receive NDIS funding to access services and supports from registered and unregistered NDIS providers.

Participant: A person who meets the NDIS access requirements.

Peak body: An organisation which represents organisations and members of the community in the disability sector.

Plan-managed participant: A participant whose NDIS Plan is managed by a provider who is registered with the NDIS Commission to deliver Plan Management. Participants who choose a plan management provider can access supports and services from both registered and non-registered providers for most supports.

Registered NDIS provider: A registered NDIS provider is a person or organisation that is registered with the NDIS Commission in accordance with section 73E of the National Disability Insurance Scheme Act 2013. NDIS providers must be registered to deliver some kinds of supports (e.g. implementing regulated restrictive practices in a behaviour support plan). NDIS Providers must be registered to deliver NDIS funded supports and services to participants in the NDIS whose NDIS plan is managed by the National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA), See “Agency-Managed Participants”.

Registration Process: Registration of NDIS providers is a process that aims to ensure the provision of safe and quality services by requiring providers meet quality and competency standards and engage in additional safeguarding practices such as reportable incidents. These standards are proportionate to the risk associated with the type of service delivery and the scale of the provider.

Registration status: Indicates if an NDIS provider is registered or unregistered. See also: ‘Registered NDIS provider’ and ‘Unregistered NDIS provider’.

Safeguards: An appropriate measure or measures taken to protect participants from unnecessary risks or harm.

Self-managed participant: A participant that manages their own NDIS funding either fully or in part. Participants who choose self-management can access supports and services from both registered and non-registered providers for most supports.

Service types: Refers to groupings by type of services and supports delivered to participants. These are:

- Support at home: such as personal care, meal preparation assistance, medication and/or skill development to increase independence with daily life activities
- Household tasks: such as lawn/yard maintenance, gardening and/or cleaning
- Community access activities: such as travel/transport, appointments, shopping, social activities
- Therapeutic support: such as Occupational Therapy, Speech Therapy, Psychology etc.
- Behaviour Support: such as implementing behaviour support strategies"

Sharp practices: a range of practices involving unfair treatment or taking advantage of people.

Unregistered NDIS provider: A provider of NDIS supports and services that has not been registered with the NDIS Quality and Safeguards Commission.

Worker screening: The NDIS Worker Screening Check is an assessment of whether a person who works, or seeks to work, with people with disability poses a risk to them.

Worker/Support Worker: An individual who deliver’s NDIS funded supports or services to an NDIS participant. A worker may be a NDIS Provider or employed or engaged by a NDIS Provider (registered or unregistered). ‘Workers’ includes but is not limited to employees, sub-contractors, independent contractors and sole traders.