



INCLUSION OF SPECIALISED PARENTING PROGRAMS AS NDIS SUPPORTS

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A submission of a National Disability Insurance Group Action Circle
Prepared on behalf of the Parenting and Family Research Alliance (PAFRA)¹

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INCLUSION OF SPECIALISED PARENTING PROGRAMS AS NDIS SUPPORTS

On behalf of the Parenting and Family Research Alliance (PAFRA), we are writing to express our concern that the recently published draft list of NDIS supports excludes evidence-based parenting programs. This omission is inconsistent with the inclusion of early intervention supports for early childhood, given the well-established evidence that parenting programs play a critical role in achieving better long-term outcomes for children with developmental delays or disabilities and their families².

Parenting Programs: Essential Early Intervention

The inclusion of early intervention supports for early childhood recognises their capacity to optimise developmental outcomes. Parenting programs share this goal, equipping parents with the knowledge, skills, and confidence to support their child's development in critical areas such as communication, emotional regulation, and functional skills. These programs directly align with the objectives of the NDIS to enhance family capacity and promote inclusion.

The 2016 *National Guidelines for Best Practice in Early Childhood Intervention* state that a key role of early intervention practitioners is to support parents and caregivers to provide children with experiences and opportunities that promote skill development and meaningful participation in family and community life. Parenting programs represent best-practice early intervention by empowering families to embed developmental strategies into daily routines.

A Specialist Area Requiring Collaboration

Parenting programs for families raising children with disabilities are specialised supports requiring trained practitioners. These professionals, if not already therapists, must work collaboratively with therapy staff to ensure alignment with therapeutic goals. Such integration maximises the impact of early intervention and ensures consistency across supports provided through the NDIS.

Overcoming Barriers to Access

We are deeply concerned about the prospect of parenting supports being delivered through child protection or general family support services. Such a model risks stigmatising families, which may deter them from seeking assistance. Positioning parenting programs within the NDIS ensures that they are viewed as developmental supports rather than interventions associated with negative connotations.

Recommendations

1. Revise the Draft List and Foundational Supports Framework

Parenting programs should be explicitly recognised as NDIS-funded supports under capacity-building initiatives. This inclusion acknowledges their evidence base and alignment with best practice early intervention guidelines.

2. Recognise Parenting Programs as Essential Early Intervention

Parenting programs should be regarded as essential, akin to early childhood interventions, given their shared focus on achieving long-term developmental outcomes.

3. Provide Clear Guidance and Reduce Barriers

Families, planners, and providers should have access to clear information about evidence-based parenting programs and their availability through the NDIS.

4. Support Practitioner Training and Quality Assurance

- Fund training initiatives to build practitioner expertise in delivering evidence-based parenting programs.
- Establish quality assurance mechanisms to monitor the uptake and outcomes of parenting programs.
- Collect data to assess the effectiveness of parenting programs in improving parental confidence, reducing stress, and enhancing child outcomes.

Conclusion

By excluding parenting programs, the draft list of NDIS supports creates a significant gap in the system, leaving families without access to a crucial component of early intervention. We urge the Department to recognise the role of parenting programs in building family capacity, achieving better developmental outcomes for children, and supporting the long-term sustainability of the NDIS.

¹ The Parenting and Family Research Alliance (PAFRA) is a multidisciplinary collaboration that brings together dedicated experts to conduct research, communication and advocacy pertaining to parenting, families and evidence-based parenting support. www.pafra.org

² Full reference list is available on request.