

Submission to The Department of Social Services in support of Sandtray Therapy in Australia

A copy of the letter sent to

Attention: Bill Shorten MP

MINISTER FOR THE NATIONAL DISABILITY INSURANCE SCHEME.
MINISTER FOR GOVERNMENT SERVICES.
MEMBER FOR MARIBYRNONG.

Cc :

Mr (Roy) Royal Francis BUTLER, MP

Member of the Legislative Assembly
Member for Barwon
Independent

Barnaby Joyce
Member for New England

Mark **Coulton** MP
Federal Member for **Parkes**

I would like to introduce myself, my name is Joanna Wallace and I am the President of the Sandtray Therapy Association of Australia inc. (STTAA). STTAA is a non-profit association who advocate for Sandtray Therapy within a wide field of counselling and psychotherapy. Our Association is registered in NSW and run by volunteers. Here is the link for more information about this evidenced based psychotherapy and I have attached research to support our methodology. Sandtray therapy is over 100 years old as a working model and it was first developed by Dr Margaret Lowenfeld paediatrician specifically to work with children with complex needs, PTSD and anxiety.

<https://www.sttaa.org.au/>

I am writing to you today to convey my profound shock, concern, and apprehension regarding the recent decisions taken that from 3 October, participants will only be able to use their NDIS funds for items listed as approved supports. Your government decision has effectively struck fear, anger and panic amongst NDIS participants who have been accessing Sandtray Therapy often for a number of years, and have been told they can no longer continue to do so. I personally have been affected by the Government's decision, along with other qualified Sandtray Therapists who are members of the Sandtray Therapy Association of Australia.

As the President of the Sandtray Therapy Association of Australia I hold a Bachelor of Education, 11242NAT Graduate Diploma of Sandtray Therapy (AQF level 8) and am

accredited with NESA for Primary Teaching. I have 13 years' experience working with the most vulnerable families and children of our communities through NSW Department of Communities and Justice. It has been my first-hand experience of witnessing and working alongside children and young people in the child protection system and out of home care that I saw the need for Sandtray therapy. Talk therapy does not work for everyone, examples being Autism Spectrum Disorder, Intellectual Disability, Downs Syndrome, Hearing Impairment and Acquired Brain Injury or Speech Language Disorders. In my professional experience and through STTAA data collection (for ongoing research purposes) I have seen Sandtray Therapy the benefits and outcomes as a solution to this systemic problem of our NDIS community.

Our STTAA members have received emails from NDIS services stating they cannot recognise Sandtray Therapy line item 'other therapies' as approved therapy support from NDIS list. This is particularly troubling as we were currently in the process of growing our membership and advocating to NDIA for Sandtray therapy to have its own line item. Our members stay informed about industry developments and actively participate in professional networking is vital for members to adapt our practices effectively, yet the NDIA's actions have made this increasingly difficult.

While we have been made aware of a potential future option to access support under "social and community participation," this comes with reduced hourly rates and providers who may lack the necessary skills and qualifications. This development is devastating for both clients and therapists alike. The revised rate has been set at \$67.56 per hour. This rate positions highly qualified Sandtray Therapists below the remuneration levels of other service providers, such as counsellors and therapy assistants, who may not possess equivalent skills, experience, and tertiary qualifications.

Therapeutic Goals achievable under Sandtray therapy

- Improved behaviours and social skills
- Improved health and wellbeing
- Increased participation in physical activities
- Effective communication skills
- Developing skills and independence
- Enriching social engagement

Capacity Building Supports achievable under Sandtray therapy

- Improved daily living:
- Improved health and well-being
- Improved relationships

I strongly urge the NDIS Evidence Advisory Committee to ensure that Sandtray Therapy is appropriately recognised and remunerated within the NDIS framework. By addressing these issues, the NDIS can continue to provide high-quality,

participant-centred care that supports the rights and needs of all Australians with disabilities.

Yours sincerely,

Joanna Wallace

President

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Further research evidence can be supplied.