

Whittlesea Disability Network 2026 Community Catch-ups

Four WDN community catch-ups were held across Wollert, Thomastown, Whittlesea, and South Morang during March and April. A total of 34 members attended these sessions, sharing experiences, asking questions, and engaging in discussions about NDIS changes and community priorities.

Presentation at the catchups included:

Overview of the Whittlesea Disability Network

- WDN provides an inclusive forum to support people with disability to participate fully in community life.
- WDN Online Hub: A Council-moderated platform for sharing information, consultation, and staying updated.
- Communication: Members can register to receive the bi-monthly newsletter *Access Point* and notifications about forums and events.
Visit [Whittlesea Disability Network Hub | Engage City of Whittlesea](#) or email access@whittlesea.vic.gov.au to join.

Key Themes for 2026

From the November 2025 WDN meeting, members highlighted four priorities:

- Navigating Supports and Systems: Understanding NDIS changes and updates.
- Employment and Education
- Inclusive Communities and Access
- Wellbeing

NDIS Updates

Topics included the:

- New Planning Framework
- Support Needs Assessment
- Thriving Kids
- the NDIS Amendment (Integrity and Safeguarding) Bill 2025

Local NDIS data:

- 7,424 residents participate, 59% under 18. Most common disabilities: autism (37%), developmental delay (18%), intellectual disability (13%), psychosocial disability (7%). Explore more at [NDIS Local Data](#).

NDIS Webinars and Council Events

- Participants were reminded of upcoming webinars and local events. Visit the [NDIS Events Page](#) and [Events | City of Whittlesea](#)

Discussion

Members were invited to discuss the following questions:

- What recent NDIS changes have you noticed or experienced?
- How have these changes affected you or the people you support?
- What information would help you feel more confident navigating the NDIS right now?

They shared their experiences with recent NDIS changes and the resulting impacts on people with disability, their carers, and service providers. The feedback from the members is captured below.

Recent Changes Observed

Significant changes have been identified to NDIS plans, funding, and processes. Key changes include:

- Reductions in plan funding and support coordination hours.
- Shortened plan periods from two years to one, with five-year plans introduced for new participants.
- Increased documentation requirements for consumables, sports, allied health, and transport.
- Greater complexity in understanding and actioning plans, report writing, and budgeting incremental funding.
- Turnover of qualified support coordinators, allied health professionals, disability support workers, and local area coordinators.
- Reduced support for self-managed plans and extracurricular activities for children.
- Updates to the NDIS portal affecting access and plan management.
- Shifts in impairment categories and funding periods, creating additional challenges for participants and providers.
- Uncertainty around the role of NDIS assessors and challenges accessing services initially.
- Reduced involvement of support coordinators in participant supports and challenges with housing funding prior to hospital discharge.

Impact on Participants and Carers

These changes have created widespread challenges, including:

- Increased fear, stress, and uncertainty about funding, service access, and repayments.
- Difficulty fully utilising plans due to administrative complexity, including paused therapies and delayed approvals.

- Reduced confidence in the NDIS and NDIA, with some participants disengaging or giving up.
- Additional pressures on carers to fill gaps in support.
- Service interruptions when invoices or quotes are rejected by plan managers.
- Confusion due to inconsistent communication from NDIS, third-party call centres, and online portals.
- Reduced engagement in programs unless free, and in some cases, serious distress including hospital admissions.

Information and Support Needs

Participants and providers identified several supports to improve confidence in navigating the NDIS:

- Regular, accessible information sessions, webinars, and face-to-face opportunities for discussion.
- Clear, consistent, and timely communication, including standardised advice from the NDIS line.
- Participant-friendly tools, “cheat sheets,” and explanations of plan structures, funding, and approvals.
- Guidance on preparing for assessments and understanding assessor qualifications and specialisations.
- Greater local support through Local Area Coordinators and clear pathways for provider assistance.
- Practical guidance for self-managed plans, budgeting, rollovers, and alternative community supports.
- Advocacy and awareness of participant rights to ensure choice, control, and active participation in decision-making.