

MEDIA RELEASE – FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE - 13 May 2026

“Fair go for all” rings hollow while Autistic people and carers remain locked out of participation”

The Australian Autism Alliance says the Federal Budget and broader disability reform agenda raise serious questions about where Autistic Australians and their families fit within the Government’s vision of a “fair go for all Australians”.

The Alliance said the reforms represent a major system shift — not a small adjustment — with significant numbers of people expected to transition out of the NDIS over coming years.

“For many families, this will be experienced as cuts to support,” said Ms Jenny Karavolos, Independent Co-Chair of the Australian Autism Alliance.

“We support reform. But reform must meet a clear standard: **no one should be moved until something better is in place. If systems aren’t ready, reform isn’t ready.**”

The Alliance warned the reforms risk repeating a historic pattern where Autistic people and families become the “shock absorbers” of systems governments have not yet fixed.

“**Changing access doesn’t change need — it shifts it,**” Ms Karavolos said.

The Alliance warned that if disability supports are reduced or removed before systems including education, health, housing, employment and community systems are genuinely ready, the costs do not disappear.

“They shift onto families, schools, hospitals, unpaid carers and future generations.”

The Alliance said the question is not whether supports move. **The question is whether the systems receiving people are genuinely better than the systems they left.**

The Alliance noted that many of the systems Autistic people relied on before the NDIS had already been identified through the Disability Royal Commission and Senate Inquiry into Autism as fragmented, inconsistent and often not fit for purpose.

“Reform cannot simply recreate the conditions that failed people in the first place,” Ms Karavolos said.

“Rebuilding systems after years of underinvestment — without repeating past mistakes — is a major national reform task.”

The Alliance also questioned whether mainstream systems are being strengthened at the scale required while governments expect them to absorb greater responsibility under disability reform.

“Education, health and community systems are central to whether these reforms succeed or fail,” Ms Karavolos said.

“Education is not an optional extra. It is the pathway to participation, inclusion and life opportunities.”

The Alliance said exclusion continues to carry major long-term human and economic costs.

“Exclusion is economically expensive,” Ms Karavolos said.

“Transition should occur at the pace of system readiness — not savings targets,” Ms Karavolos said.

“Investment must happen before transition.”

“Australia needs systems that work — for everyone.”

“The real test of reform is not simply whether government spends less,” Ms Karavolos said.

“It is whether people are safer, included and able to participate.”

“When systems fail, Australia pays through lost participation, increased family burnout, greater mental health pressures, higher crisis demand and growing reliance on the informal care economy,” Ms Karavolos said.

The Alliance is calling for:

- no-gap protections, transition safeguards and real time resolution pathways;
- transparent reporting on reform outcomes;
- investment in mainstream systems before large-scale transition;
- re-establishment of a cross-government Disability Royal Commission implementation mechanism with independent oversight; and
- reform to proceed only where systems, safeguards and support pathways are operational and ready.

The Alliance said the success of reform should not be measured by how many people leave the NDIS.

“It should be measured by whether people experience better lives afterwards,” Ms Karavolos said.

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Refer: [Australian Autism Alliance Pre Budget Submission](#)

About the Australian Autism Alliance: We are the national peak body furthering the rights and interests of Autistic people across the life span, their parents and carers, and the autism community in Australia. The members represent a cohesive national network of key organisations with a diverse focus on autism. For more information about Australian Autism Alliance go to: australianautismalliance.org.au and connect with us on LinkedIn, and Facebook.