



Women
With
Disabilities
Australia
(WWDA)

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Thriving Kids begins, while people aged nine and over are still waiting for answers on foundational supports

Women With Disabilities Australia (WWDA) says the start of the Thriving Kids rollout today has sharpened questions about what foundational supports will be available for people aged nine and over who need disability support outside the NDIS.

Thriving Kids is the first phase of Foundational Supports and will support children aged eight and under with developmental delay and/or autism with low to moderate support needs.

WWDA CEO Sophie Cusworth said the focus now needed to be on making sure the supports promised through Thriving Kids were actually available and working for children and families.

"For the children and families who will use Thriving Kids, the support needs to be there when they need it, meet their individual needs and be something families can rely on," Ms Cusworth said.

"We have heard a lot about Thriving Kids because it is the first part of foundational supports to be rolled out.

"But for everyone who sits outside that program, there are still some very basic questions that haven't been answered. What support will be available? Who will be able to access it? When will it start?"

WWDA said the rollout must meet the needs of girls and gender-diverse children with disability and avoid gaps in support that place greater pressure on disabled parents and families.

"In our consultation on foundational supports, we heard from disabled parents who were already burnt out trying to find support for themselves while also fighting to get the right support for their children," Ms Cusworth said.

"When services are hard to access or don't meet people's needs, families are often left doing more advocacy, coordination and unpaid care themselves. We know that responsibility is still disproportionately carried by women."

WWDA is also concerned about what the next phases of foundational supports will mean for older children, young people and adults, including women and gender-diverse people with chronic and episodic health conditions who already struggle to get the disability support they need.

"For women and gender-diverse people with chronic and episodic conditions, we have been asking for a long time what foundational supports will actually look like," Ms Cusworth said.

"Their support needs can change over time, and many are already struggling to get the right support through the systems we have now."

Those questions have become more pressing following major changes to the NDIS legislated this year.

WWDA has consistently warned against changes to NDIS access taking effect before alternative supports are properly funded, co-designed, tested and operational.

The organisation is calling on governments to publish a clear roadmap for the next phases of foundational supports, including what will be available for people aged nine and over, who can access it and when, while protecting continuity of support for people moving between foundational supports and the NDIS.

"Thriving Kids is now moving from planning into delivery. We need to see the same level of work going into the supports for everyone who isn't covered by it," Ms Cusworth said.

"Women, girls and gender-diverse people with disability need to know what is being built, when it will be available and what it will mean for them."