

To whom it may concern.

My name is Mark Davis. I am 57 years old and live with autism, ADHD, OCD, complex PTSD, dissociative identity disorder, depression, anxiety and an eating disorder. I live on the disability support pension. It took five years to access the NDIS and it has had an amazingly profoundly wonderful impact on my life. I didn't know how much I was missing out on in life. I live alone, with my companion cat, in my own home since my mother died. I bought my home with my inheritance. I was almost completely isolated until I got my NDIS plan. Now my life has opened hugely with the support people I now have in my life. I still must manage many things on my own because I have complex mental health conditions that prevent me from accessing much of the plan supports.

I am anxious that the proposed laws will give the minister too much power to change things without any review, appeal or oversight. I have had issues with government administrative decisions that aren't reviewable even when there was proven wrongdoing by a decision maker. No one listens—no one is required to, and then no one is required to act. Currently the review process and other NDIA processes seem to be designed to put up roadblocks to get people to give up. It was a 5-year journey for me to get access to the NDIS, but it has profoundly changed my daily lived experience. It's been amazing, but it was a horrible journey to get here. The minister isn't required to consider the input from disability groups or advocates. We don't have powerful and expensive lobby groups or professional associations. However, we *do* have disability groups full of people with lots of experience living with disabilities in Australia. Why isn't the minister required to consider our/their input or engage in some collaboration or consultation? The minister can just ignore us.

The appeal or decision review process is not clear or defined, so we could be effectively powerless to have decisions that profoundly affect our lives reviewed. This is important for me because the new laws don't require considering the impacts of multiple co-occurring conditions. I have autism and that is all that is recognised for my NDIS plan. However, I also have complex PTSD, dissociative disorder, anxiety and depression that are all permanent conditions (or have been for over 40 years). These are all related to the autism and the effects the autism, but the NDIA won't acknowledge their impacts or the barriers they impose on my

accessing the autism supports. Just writing these conditions down doesn't give any indication of the effects they have on my daily functioning. There should be a whole person approach because we are complex as individuals. And getting the NDIA to acknowledge these complexities is so incredibly difficult already. These new laws could make it harder.

The issue around assessments is broad and up to the minister of the day. Using contractors who have a vested interest in giving assessments in favour of the NDIA, or requiring extra assessments can cause stress and harm and push out people. I know that my consultant doesn't take new patients and I must make my quarterly appointments 12 months in advance (and have done for eight years). Finding anyone good who can take on new patients, or do assessments, is hard and stressful. Even as private patients. People, clinical professionals, that are easy to see are to be avoided because they can't be any good. One of my mental health team had a 5 month wait list but was well worth it. Also, some conditions, like mental, neurodevelopmental, cognitive or psychiatric don't fit neatly like with MRI scans or blood tests. Finding people with the proper qualifications and experience can be a long, expensive and difficult process.

There needs to be something done about the outrageous 'NDIS Tax'. I have had many experiences of the prices going up (to the NDIS max) as soon as the provider knows its an NDIS case. This is very annoying when there is a scarcity of different types of providers. Trying to find a speech therapist that works with adults with autism in [REDACTED] (North Queensland) is so hard. It's even harder because my other conditions prevent me from accessing tele/virtual/online sessions. But there still needs to be some reasonable flexibility to enable us to find and choose the supports that best suit us. For me it has been very difficult to find the right people. I have had experience of being harmed because I was forced to work with the wrong people because I couldn't afford to access the right ones. I have had to cease support relationships because something that other people might think is insignificant has created internal experiences that would be traumatic if I was forced to continue to work with those people.

I am really, scared that the proposed changes will take away my support choices and maybe even my supports; will make it harder to get my whole (complex) circumstances considered;

will add complexity, time, costs and stress to being forced to undergo extra assessments. The scariest thing is that the minister of the day could make getting decisions reviewed even more difficult than they currently are. We are already almost powerless, and these laws will make us even more powerless. It's not our fault that we have these conditions and need these supports. I just want to live a life that is better than it could possibly be without these supports, even though it is still way less than for normal people.

Thank you for reading this submission.

Kind regards, Mark