



TASA The Australian
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Who counts as disabled? Eligibility and the NDIS

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In this paper I will be examining the implications for how disability is defined for funding disability support. With the trialling and roll out of the National Disability Insurance Scheme, Australia is currently undergoing huge changes to the way in which disability support is funded and provided. Despite the extensive repositioning around disability support, disability, impairment and eligibility remain loosely defined in the policy surrounding the NDIS. Disability studies and international examples of reclassification of disability demonstrate how important definitions of disability are to the way in which disability is supported and the kinds of supports that are funded. This paper aims to firstly set out how disability is being defined, both explicitly and implicitly, in the NDIS policy and grey literature. Secondly, it will compare the definition of disability in the NDIS to the ways in which disability has been defined in similar countries, the UK and NZ, and some of the implications for these definitions in the longer term. Thirdly, it will explore ways in which Australia's definitions of disability in the NDIS have already begun to create particular patterns and a particular narrowing of disability support. The paper argues that disability research, advocacy and international examples show that definitions of disability within state structures can have significant implications for how and when disability is supported.