

Welcome to the MH-NDIS Project Updates!

We are excited to keep you connected with the latest research activities and invite you to explore opportunities to participate. Please feel free to share these updates with your networks. If you'd like to stay informed, simply email us to subscribe and receive regular updates directly to your email inbox.

We look forward to staying in touch with you.

Kind regards,

The MH-NDIS Research Team

Fixing the NDIS for People with Psychosocial Disability

Our five-year project (2024-2029) funded by an Australian Research Council Industry Laureate Fellowship awarded to Professor Jen Smith-Merry aims to address serious deficits in the operation of the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) for one of its largest participant groups: people with psychosocial disability.

In this newsletter we provide updates on completed and ongoing work and how you can connect with this. For more information about the project scope and background and to see our latest publications visit: [NDIS Psychosocial Disability ARC Laureate Project](#)

Project activities

Targeted Foundational Supports for Psychosocial disability:

Our project team are very concerned about the possibility of Foundational Supports for psychosocial disability either failing to progress or not progressing in a way where they are really able to address the significant gaps outside of the NDIS for people with Psychosocial Disability. We are very keen to utilise our research and modelling to push political action on Foundational Supports and would welcome any opportunities to do so that you in our community come across. We are very keen to be of utility to the sector in ensuring that these gaps are met.

Professor Jen Smith-Merry (Laureate Fellow and Program lead) and Dr Bernie Mullin (project Senior Research Advisor and Lived Experience (carer)) have been presenting at multiple forums across the country to discuss our model of Foundational Supports for psychosocial disability. Most recently Jen presented at the Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Psychiatry Section of Social, Cultural & Rehabilitation Psychiatry 2026 Conference in Launceston. She presented alongside Gerry Naughtin (former NDIA Psychosocial advisor), Dorothy Belperio (NDIS provider) and Cathy Limb (National Disability Services Tasmania). A photo with moderator Professor Lisa Brophy, Section lead Dr Nick Burns, and our collaborator Dr Stephen Parker Parker (Qld Health) is included below.

A series of publications is now available that provides an explanation of the foundational support model. The model and supporting documents are available here: [NDIS Psychosocial Disability ARC Laureate Project](#)

Exploring a foundational supports model for people with psychosocial disability webinar was conducted on 12 November with over 250 people registering interest. Access to the webinar and

presentation is available, [Building a system of foundational supports for psychosocial disability across Australia.](#)



Work currently being undertaken:

- Housing and the NDIS: A major program of work developing a national model to improve the way that supported housing is provided for people with psychosocial disability through improvements in policy and practice. We will soon begin interviews with stakeholders on this topic. **Please contact** mh-ndis.project@sydney.edu.au or complete the form in this [link](#) if you are interested in contributing to this stage of the work.
- People outside of the NDIS: Qualitative interviews with people experiencing mental health challenges outside of the NDIS. We are nearing completion on this work but still looking for participants from South Australia, so please get in touch if you know of people we should contact.
- Economic Modelling and Scenario Analysis of the Support Pathways for People with Psychosocial Disability. This project employs microsimulation modelling to examine how different support pathways - such as Foundational Supports, NDIS Early Intervention (s25), and Intensive NDIS supports (s24) - influence system-level costs and outcomes over time.
 - A Technical Advisory Group (TAG) has been established to support the methodological rigour, transparency, and policy relevance of this project. The TAG comprises experts with diverse and complementary expertise, including health economists, systems modellers, mental health specialists, policy advisors, and disability researchers.
 - We are currently in Phase 1 of this three-year project, which focuses on establishing the epidemiological foundation of the model. This includes estimating the prevalence and projected number of cases of psychosocial disability, as well as deriving mortality rates and their variation across levels of functional limitation.
- An analysis of access to the National Disability Insurance Scheme for Psychosocial Disability: Analysis of Eligibility Trends and Determinants using Administrative Data, 2013–2025
- Disparities in mental health disorders and service use in Australia: Analysis of the National Study of Mental Health and Wellbeing (2020–2022)

- Social determinants of mental health disorders in Australia: Analysis of the National Study of Mental Health and Wellbeing (2020–2022)
 - This study examines how social and economic factors shape the prevalence of mental health disorders in Australia, using nationally representative data from the 2020–2022 National Study of Mental Health and Wellbeing.
- Easy read version of reports is currently in development and available later this year.

Connecting with the academic community:

- Thalia-Rose Vanissum joins the team in the First Nations higher degree scholarship position.
- Jen and Bernie presented Targeted Foundational Supports for Psychosocial Disability to the Transforming Australia’s Mental Health Service System [TAMHSS] group on the 3rd of March.
- **Recent publications include:**
 - Mullin, B., J Smith-Merry, J Hollier. (2026) [Review of Commonwealth commissioned reports 2020-2025: themes and key findings relevant to targeted foundational supports for psychosocial disability](#). Sydney: Centre for Disability Research and Policy, The University of Sydney.
 - Chang, K. J., Yen, I., Bobo, F., Hollier, J., & Smith-Merry, J. (2026). Implementing Community-Based Psychosocial Interventions for Adults with Severe Mental Illness in High-Income Countries: A Rapid Scoping Review. *Community Mental Health Journal*. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10597-025-01583-5>
 - Hollier, J., & Smith-Merry, J. (2026). Expectations and Reality: The Lived Experiences of Australians with Psychosocial Disability Within the NDIS. *The Australian Journal of Social Issues*. <https://doi.org/10.1002/ajs4.70096>
 - Chang, KYJ. J. Hollier, H. Kim, I. Yen, & J. Smith-Merry. (2026). [Recent and proposed changes for the NDIS: What does it mean for people with mental health support needs?](#) Sydney: Centre for Disability Research and Policy, The University of Sydney
 - Smith-Merry, J, B. Mullin, J. Hollier and F. Bobo (2025) [Targeted foundational supports for people with psychosocial disability outside of the NDIS: model proposal](#). Sydney: Centre for Disability Research and Policy, The University of Sydney.
 - Bobo, F. T., Hollier, J., Yen, I., Chang, K.-Y. J., & Smith-Merry, J. (2025). Disparities in access to health and support services for people with disability in Australia: a scoping review of the structural social determinants. *BMC Health Services Research*, 26(1), Article 72. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12913-025-13904-1>
 - Smith-Merry, J, B. Mullen, J. Hollier, F. Bobo and J. Chang (2025). [Targeted foundational supports for people with psychosocial disability outside of the NDIS: Model background and rationale](#). Sydney: Centre for Disability Research and Policy, The University of Sydney. <https://doi.org/10.25910/51s0-5x20>
 - Chang, KYJ. J. Hollier, J. Smith-Merry, I. Yen, H. Kim (2025). [Beyond the NDIS: Unmet needs, Foundational Supports and system reform for psychosocial disability](#). Sydney: Centre for Disability Research and Policy, The University of Sydney
 - Smith-Merry J, B. Mullin, J. Hollier (2025). [Targeted foundational supports for psychosocial disability: evidence from qualitative interviews with sector](#)

[‘stakeholders’](#). Sydney: Centre for Disability Research and Policy, The University of Sydney

Opportunities to be involved

Recent submissions:

- November 2025, [NDIS Evidence Advisory Committee \(EAC\) consultation](#) on the six disability supports

Ongoing conversations are key to the success and relevance of our project. We are keen to involve people with severe mental illness/psychosocial disability (both NDIS participants and those who are not), carers, community members, service providers, advocates, policy makers and other experts.

Participation in interviews: ongoing throughout the project. If you are interested, you can use this link here. Get in touch with Dr Joel Hollier if you want more information:

joel.hollier@sydney.edu.au

Team visits, community discussions and presentations. Our team are available to come and speak to community groups, government departments and academic research teams. Contact Jen for further information: jennifer.smith-merry@sydney.edu.au

For more information, please contact us: mh-ndis.project@sydney.edu.au