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Push to rethink support for kids

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Children being moved off the NDIS on to the new Thriving Kids scheme will be worse off if psychologists aren't embedded, the leading peak bodies have warned ahead of the program beginning this week.

Queensland is still yet to sign on to Thriving Kids, the first phase of which will begin on Thursday before a full rollout in January 2028.

While this week's changes are about helping parents prepare for the program switch, the Australian Psychological Society and the Australian Association of Psychologists Inc. say there's an opportunity to

rethink how Australia supports children and families.

AAPi executive director Tegan Carrison said embedding psychologists into early intervention pathways was critical to children's wellbeing.

"Early childhood reform must strengthen, not dilute, access to psychological expertise. If we are genuinely committed to helping children thrive, we need a model that recognises the central role of psychologists in delivering safe, effective and developmentally informed care," she said.

APS president Kelly Gough echoed that sentiment.

"Helping children thrive is about identifying developmental needs early, understanding what is driving a child's behaviour, and connecting children and families with the right expertise and support at the right time," she said.

The federal government said under Thriving Kids almost \$12m was being funnelled into the Mental Health in Primary School initiative "to build the capacity and capability of primary schools to recognise and respond to student mental health and wellbeing needs".

It also heaped pressure on Queensland to sign up.

"Queensland joined every other state and territory earlier this year in signing a national agreement for foundational supports as part of the (National Health Reform Agreement) deal, as well as a Heads of Agreement on the National deal that includes Thriving Kids," a spokeswoman said.

"The expectation now is that those commitments are implemented so the benefits of the agreement can be realised."