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Don't lay blame on NDIS kids

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Don’t lay blame on NDIS kids

Katrina Norris

Recent commentary on the NDIS reflects valid concerns about the scheme’s sustainability. But the way the conversation is unfolding in relation to autism, children and clinicians is also concerning.

Too often, rising participation in the NDIS is being framed as evidence of misuse. A key example is the repeated focus on the proportion of participants with autism, now at about 40 per cent. This figure is presented as proof the scheme is overrun by people who do not “really” need it.

What is missing from this narrative is context. The NDIS itself reports that 73 per cent of participants with a primary diagnosis of autism experience severe or profound disability.

Despite this, public commentary is increasingly

pointing the finger at clinicians. Claims that psychologists and other professionals are “pathologising” normal behaviour, or deliberately inflating diagnoses to secure NDIS access, have been aired without evidence.

To suggest that clinicians are broadly exaggerating diagnoses is to imply widespread professional misconduct. This is an extraordinary claim that demands evidence, not speculation.

The same pattern emerges in discussions about provider behaviour.

The statistic that 94 per cent of providers are not registered with the NDIS has been used to imply a lack of qualifications or accountability. This overlooks that all psychologists are qualified and regulated by the Psychology Board of Australia, with

standards, codes of conduct and complaints processes.

It’s clear the NDIS requires reform. Costs are rising, and the system must be sustainable. But focusing on specific groups, particularly children and people with autism, as the source of the problem, risks oversimplifying a far more complex issue.

The critical question is this: if people are pushed out of the NDIS, where do they go?

Reform must be guided by data, best practice and evidence, not assumptions – and by solutions, not scapegoating.

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