

Joint Statement on the Inappropriate Use of Psychotropic Medicines to Manage the Behaviours of People with Disability and Older People

What are Psychotropic Medicines?

Psychotropics are medicines that can affect the brain's function. Commonly used psychotropic medicines are prescribed to treat mental ill-health such as schizophrenia and bipolar disorders, prevent mental health symptoms such as depression and anxiety, and to treat other conditions such as epilepsy and attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD).

Who is making this joint statement?

The Commissioners of the Aged Care Quality and Safety Commission (ACQSC), the NDIS Quality and Safeguards Commission (NDIS Commission) and the CEO of the Australian Commission on Safety and Quality in Health Care. The ACQSC is responsible for regulating aged care providers. The NDIS Commission is responsible for regulating NDIS providers. The ACSQHC leads and coordinates national improvements in healthcare safety and quality.

Why do we have this joint statement?

In this joint statement, the three Commissions recognise that psychotropic medicines can be appropriate treatments for a mental or physical conditions or related symptoms. However, there is:

- Evidence that psychotropic medicines are being inappropriately prescribed, in particular with older people and people with disability;

- Insufficient evidence that psychotropic medicines are effective for managing behaviours of concern;
- Evidence that psychotropic medicines can contribute to risks of harm to older people and people with disability, including by contributing to risk of falls, weight gain, hypertension and diabetes, by adversely affecting the person's ability to swallow, and by increasing the risk for aspiration pneumonia and other respiratory complications;
- Evidence that psychotropic medicines can diminish the wellbeing and quality of life of older people and people with disability.

By working together with other key individuals and organisations within the health, aged care and disability sectors, the three Commissions aim to reduce the inappropriate use of psychotropic medicines, and improve the quality and safety of health, aged care and disability supports for all Australians.

What does this mean for NDIS Providers?

NDIS disability providers:

- uphold the dignity and rights of participants, and ensure the well-being and safety of participants;
- ensure that restrictive practices, including the use of psychotropic medicines to manage behaviour, are only used as a last resort;
- are required to develop behaviour support plans and get the plan authorised by the relevant State/Territory bodies, and



implement behaviour support strategies to reduce and eventually eliminate restrictive practice use;

- create awareness of the risks associated with the inappropriate use of psychotropic medicines among their workforce;
- ensure that the use of psychotropic medicines to manage a person's behaviour is regularly reviewed.

What does this mean for NDIS participants?

- NDIS participants and their carers can discuss the benefits and potential harms associated with psychotropic medicines with the prescribing medical practitioner and decision-making should take into account the preferences and needs of participants;
- NDIS participants receiving psychotropic medicines to manage their behaviours have the right to have these reviewed by a qualified medical practitioner on a regular basis or to seek an independent review.



General enquiries

Call: 1800 035 544 (free call from landlines).

Our contact centre is open 9.00am to 5.00pm (9.00am to 4.30pm in the NT) Monday to Friday, excluding public holidays.

Email: contactcentre@ndiscommission.gov.au

Website: www.ndiscommission.gov.au



**NDIS Quality
and Safeguards
Commission**

**Fact Sheet on the Joint Statement on the Inappropriate Use
of Psychotropic Medicines to Manage the Behaviours
of People with Disability and Older People**

March 2022