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The Inklings WA pilot program ended in November 2026 following a 3-year pilot.

The program was made available to Western Australian (WA) parents and caregivers of babies and toddlers aged 6 to 18 months who are showing early differences in how they connect and communicate with others.

The Inklings program aims to support caregivers to understand and respond to their baby's unique communication cues. This helps babies to learn and develop within a responsive social environment that meets their individual needs.

The Inklings pilot in WA was funded by a grant from the National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA) to The Kids Research Institute Australia (The Kids).

It was delivered in partnership with WA Child and Adolescent Health Services (CAHS) and WA Country Health Service (WACHS).

An independent evaluation will assess if Inklings can be delivered at a larger scale. It will also look at how it should be adjusted for different settings.

The evaluation will provide insights on program implementation and effectiveness and will support future decisions.

Find out more about the Inklings program on the Inklings website .

How Inklings is working with First Nations communities

As part of the pilot, The Kids consulted with First Nations communities in WA to understand how Inklings can be more culturally safe and accessible.

The consultations focused on how Inklings can better support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families in the early years.

The consultation included 71 meetings with First Nations peoples and people from services that support First Nations communities.

Key feedback included:

- the early years are a priority for First Nations communities
- there is a need and want for more education and awareness around early development and when to seek support
- programs must be culturally safe to support family engagement.

A key finding of this consultation was that First Nations families felt adaptation of Inklings was not a priority at this time.

It also found that Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations (ACCOs) should lead the design of how the program should be adjusted for First Nations families in remote communities.

The summary consultation report is available on the Inklings website .

Inklings pilot evaluation

Evaluation approach

The NDIA is evaluating how the Inklings program works in real-world settings using a 3-phase approach.

An Evaluation Reference Group, which includes people with disability, guides the evaluation.

Findings will offer insights on how best to support families needing early childhood intervention.

The evaluation aims to:

- evaluate if the Inklings program can be implemented and delivered at scale in real-world settings
- identify the benefits Inklings can deliver for infants showing signs of social or communication differences, and their caregivers
- identify lessons and approaches for promoting integration between the NDIS and mainstream health services in early childhood supports.

The NDIA is delivering Phase 1 of the evaluation which will look at:

- the number of people accessing Inklings in WA
- how Inklings is delivered using different approaches. For example, telehealth
- the experiences and satisfaction of caregivers, clinicians, and providers with Inklings
- considerations for delivering Inklings successfully on a larger scale.

Following a competitive procurement process, La Trobe University was appointed to conduct Phase 2 and 3 of this evaluation. La Trobe University is an independent organisation that is not involved in the delivery of the Inklings program.

These phases of the evaluation will assess:

- whether Inklings delivers better outcomes for children and caregivers compared to other currently available supports
- how families access early childhood supports to ensure the best outcomes for children and the barriers and enablers to access support.

Early insights on the implementation of the Inklings WA Pilot

The NDIA has completed a progress update on the Phase 1 implementation evaluation. It provides early observations of participants referred to the pilot from 1 October 2023 to 30 November 2024?and who participated in the pilot through to August 2025. Where possible, observations have been extended to include the

first 2 full years of the pilot participants. The insights are informed by a range of data sources including:

- an environmental scan of the existing early child support system in WA
- pilot data including program, referral and practitioner data
- surveys of caregivers and practitioners
- interviews with referring clinicians, practitioners, delivery partner management, and The Kids management.

Some of the early findings include:

- Most referrals (51%) have been by caregivers self-referring to the pilot.
- Overall numbers of commencements are lower than expected.
- Caregivers who have completed Inklings see it as helpful for them and their children.
- Practitioners who have delivered Inklings anticipate positive impacts for participating children and their caregivers, based on their experiences delivering the Inklings pilot.
- Early childhood clinicians consider the Inklings WA Pilot a valuable addition to the early child health service system. Clinicians also noted it is an intensive model that may not suit everyone.
- Having multiple delivery modes, such as in-clinic, tele-health and in-home appears to support participation.

Final evaluation reporting with findings from Phase 2 and 3 and updated findings from program implementation will be available once complete.