

Independent Advisory Council Meeting Bulletin 23 August 2021

The Independent Advisory Council (Council) to the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) brings the participant's voice to the heart of the NDIS. The Council gives independent advice to the National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA) Board, as part of the *NDIS Act 2013*.

This Bulletin summarises Council's 23 August 2021 meeting, led by Ms Robyn Kruk AO, Principal Member and co-chaired by Ms Leah Van Poppel. Mr Martin Hoffman, NDIA Chief Executive Officer (CEO), also attended the meeting with:

- Council Members
- Council's Expert Adviser
- NDIA Representatives and Council Secretariat.

From the Principal Member

The Principal Member noted that Council endorsed its 2021-22 Work Plan out of session. Council has submitted the Work Plan to the NDIA Board for feedback. In line with the communications processes established last year, Council will share the plan publicly shortly.

The Principal Member also noted that the NDIA has allocated additional resources to help the Agency better respond to Council's formal advice. This shows commitment by the NDIA to improve the implementation of Council advice through thorough internal processes and team collaboration.

She noted a productive meeting held with Disability Representative Organisations (DROs) about Council's advice [on Scheme reforms](#) and ways for the broader disability community to work together with the NDIA, in line with the outcomes of the [Disability Reform Ministers' Meeting](#).

From the NDIA CEO

The NDIA CEO acknowledged the current coronavirus (COVID-19) conditions across Australia, and the difficulty of living in lockdowns for NDIS participants, Council Members and NDIA staff.

He noted the NDIA's support measures and planning in response to recent COVID-19 outbreaks, saying that the NDIA has re-allocated resources to help participants and providers safely deliver and receive supports.

He repeated the Agency's commitment to progress work on the partnership agreement, thanking Council for their ongoing input. The NDIA CEO said that he looks forward to future consultation about the agreement and enhancing the way the NDIA engages with the disability community.

Council Members' snapshot of issues

Council Members and the Expert Adviser reported on matters they had heard from people with disability in their communities. The reports aim to bring matters to the Agency's attention, and included the following issues:

- While there is a sense of relief that Independent Assessments are not proceeding, some disability communities want reassurance that the future model is consistent with the assessment requirements under the NDIS Act. Disability communities want an assessment model that will deliver consistency and equity of both access and planning outcomes.
- The need for long term, affordable and flexible Specialist Disability Accommodation (SDA), that helps NDIS participants with extreme functional impairment live independently and have a chance to own their own home.
- The need to revisit the Australian Government's 'NDIS National Workforce Plan: 2021-2025' and address disability support worker shortages.
- Coronavirus pandemic infections and lockdowns are:
 - causing service and support disruptions for parents of children who need early childhood early intervention. Parents need more information resources from the NDIA to guide them through supports during this time.
 - affecting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) communities, with those living in rural and remote communities finding it hard to access COVID-19 vaccines.
 - causing support and service issues for some NDIS participants, who want more flexibility in their plans during this time.
 - causing a reduction in the availability of disability workers, many of whom used to be international students or from migrant or refugee backgrounds
- Issues with 'thin markets' or inadequate service availability, especially with support coordination, resulting in NDIS participants' needs not being met.
- The need for Council to better represent people with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), with its membership to include a person with lived experience of ASD.
- Increased reports of extended delays to NDIS plan approvals, especially with Complex Support Needs, home modifications and Supported Independent Living.
- NDIS participants who self-manage their plans are concerned that the 'my NDIS' mobile application (app) may cause privacy issues and funding cuts. The NDIA said the app is a user-friendly way to make and manage claims.

Update on NDIA Psychosocial Disability Recovery Framework

Dr Gerry Naughtin, NDIA Psychosocial Disability Strategic Adviser, and other NDIA representatives, updated Council on the proposed Psychosocial Disability Recovery Oriented Framework (Recovery Framework).

NDIA representatives noted the targeted consultations held from April to June 2021, including work with a Council subgroup and comprehensive engagement with diverse mental health stakeholders in each state and territory, which received over 400 submissions.

They asked for Council's feedback on the draft Recovery Framework and ways to implement the work. Members commended Dr Naughtin and the NDIA on the Framework, particularly how they engaged with the community during its development. Council Members acknowledged the comprehensive engagement of Agency staff and supported the Framework. They raised the following points:

- The need to consider implications for participants when psychosocial disability is the secondary disability, and to reference co-occurring mental disorders and physical conditions.
- The need to better clarify some of the six principles of the Recovery Framework consultation paper, through the use of clear and simple language.
- The need for trauma-informed practice for NDIS participants and trauma-informed training for NDIS staff, to enable better supports and pathways for recovery that avoids re-traumatisation. This will especially help with intergenerational trauma, which is high among Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people.
- The need to reference the 'National Strategic Framework for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples' Mental Health and Social and Emotional Wellbeing 2017-2023'.
- The need to socialise how the concept of recovery aligns with the concepts of sustainability, where people with psychosocial disability in the NDIS can build their capacity over time.
- The need to link the Recovery Framework with other NDIA programs of work, notably the NDIA Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Engagement Strategy, Cultural and Linguistic Diversity Strategy and other cohort groups, like early childhood early intervention.

Update on the partnership agreement process

Ms Leah Van Poppel, Council's Deputy Chair, noted progress on the partnership agreement that aims to improve the NDIA's relationship with the disability community, as recommended in Council's advice [on Scheme reforms](#).

She said Council members, members of the disability community and NDIA staff have had four meetings to date to gather advice on ways to:

- inform the Agency's approach to a partnership agreement with the disability community; and
- begin to develop a framework for engaging on identified issues.

The working group members are using their deep knowledge of co-design, and strong knowledge of disability and intersectional communities, to work through co-design principles for how to best work together.

As a next step, it was agreed to undertake an independently facilitated design workshop with Council members and national DROs next month to further progress this work. This workshop aims to:

- finalise a proposed structure for an agreement for consideration
- agree on engagement, consultation and co-design governance and reporting arrangements

- agree on a small steering committee with representatives from Council, DROs and other agreed stakeholders to continue to progress on the partnership agreement.

Council raised the need to:

- properly remunerate the steering committee representatives and those involved in the ongoing co-design work.
- engage the right facilitator for this work.

More information on the Council

The Council next meets on 22 September 2021. You can find out more about Council meetings at the [Council's website meeting page \(external\)](#). You can access advice from the [Council's website advice page \(external\)](#).

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