

## Independent Advisory Council Meeting Bulletin 25 February 2022

---

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 25 February 2022 meeting, chaired by Leah Van Poppel, Principal Member. Martin Hoffman, NDIA Chief Executive Officer (CEO), also attended the meeting with:

- Council Members
- Council Expert Adviser
- NDIA Representatives; and
- Council Secretariat.

### From Council's Principal Member

Leah Van Poppel acknowledged Council's hard work throughout the previous year. She extended a warm welcome to existing and new Council members, including Dr George Taleporos, appointed on 1 January 2022.

Leah stressed that accessibility, cultural safety and professional development is important to Council. This ensures members take part equally, feel safe and are supported in their roles. Leah held one-on-one meetings with members to gain feedback about improved ways of working for the Council.

Leah noted progress made by the Co-Design Advisory Group as part of the NDIA's [next steps for co-design](#). The NDIA has also set up steering committees, comprising Council members and representatives from the disability community, which will meet regularly to guide co-design projects in:

- Information Gathering for Access and Planning
- Home and living
- Supported decision making
- Participant safety.

### From the NDIA CEO

Martin Hoffman, NDIA CEO, highlighted the NDIA's continued work on COVID-19 measures to support participants during the pandemic. While restrictions around Australia are easing, the NDIA is continuing to plan for potential future variants and/or case surges.

Martin noted the NDIA's work to ensure it supports culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) participants, families and carers. He recently attended a roundtable in Canberra to connect with CALD community representatives including, as part of the NDIA's co-designed

CALD Strategy Refresh. Two Council members were present at this roundtable, and noted Martin's attendance was a powerful signal of support for people from CALD backgrounds.

## Council Members' community reports

Council Members and the Expert Adviser reported on matters for the Agency's attention, on behalf of people with disability in their communities, including:

- Continued challenges around the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on NDIS participants' supports, safety and self-management.
- Feedback that some NDIS participants are being transitioned from plan management to agency management plans without consent.
- Participants need proactive and transparent communication to understand the NDIS plan review process and home and living supports for participants.
- Continued general feedback about plan reductions for NDIS participants, with concerns about links to planners not fully understanding a participant's background and circumstance.
- Reports that some support requests are taking a long time to process or are not funded because of decisions on 'value for money'.
- Continued challenges around early childhood early intervention (ECEI), with allied health and therapies used where NDIS flexible and/or core funding would benefit development.
- ECEI partners should do more to support families who do not meet NDIS eligibility, especially given that COVID lockdowns have disrupted childhood services.
- Removal of 'out of school hours care' from state and territory government services is affecting NDIS participant plans for children. The NDIA is working with schools and state and territory education departments on this matter.
- Continued low employment rates for people with disability.
- Some rural and remote communities are reporting thin markets, and the lack of disability support workers/workforce issues.
- Continued challenges with the number of young people in residential aged care, noting that NDIS has reduced the number of young people entering aged care.
- Conflicts of interest around some NDIS providers who offer housing solutions for people with disability and residential aged care facilities.
- The need for awareness around changes to the Social, Community, Home Care and Disability Services Industry Award and the impact on NDIS plans.
- Continued challenges with NDIS participants who are awaiting hospital discharge.
- The importance of the [National Disability Data Asset](#) for nationally consistent and data-based solutions for people with disability.

## Update on NDIA operations

Jeremy Dean, Deputy CEO of Participant Experience Delivery, NDIA, updated Council on NDIA operations. He detailed NDIS performance against NDIA staff work volume, productivity, and participant growth.

Council Members invited Jeremy to present at future meetings, and noted:

- While some complaints are closed within 21 days, participants may not deem the process as being a quality outcome/experience.
- There is a need to regularly survey participants about their NDIS experience and define what quality means.
- Given the NDIA's change to a new Customer Relationship Manager (CRM) system, customer information should be safely transitioned.
- Ways to improve internal review processes, through quality control and staff training delivered by people with disability, to avoid matters going to the Administrative Appeals Tribunal.

## Update on NDIA Self-management Policy and implementation plan

Dr Sam Bennett, General Manager of Policy, Advice and Research, NDIA, discussed the Self-management Policy. The Policy aims to promote a simple, effective, and consistent approach to the self-management of funding for supports under participants' plans, and to improve outcomes for participants and their experience with the NDIS. The NDIA has also released a [self-management survey](#) through Participant First to inform the products developed as part of its implementation plan.

Sam sought Council's feedback, and Members noted:

- The co-design process for self-management has been respectful, interactive and a strong demonstration of best-practice co-design.
- While some may disagree with the NDIA's recommendation for participants to set up a dedicated bank account for NDIS funding, it was agreed that it was good practice for a number of reasons, including easy documentation.
- The NDIA should consider self-management alongside Specialist Disability Accommodation payments.

## More information on Council

Council will next meet on 28 March 2022. Find out more about Council meetings and bulletins at the [Council's website](#). You can also access advice from the [Council's website](#).

**Council publishes an Easy Read version of this Bulletin. This is part of its commitment to accessibility.**