

Independent Advisory Council Meeting Bulletin 4 February 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 provides independent advice to the National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA) Board, as part of the NDIS Act 2013.

This Bulletin summarises the Council's 4 February 2021 meeting, chaired by Ms Robyn Kruk AO, Principal Member, and attended by Mr Martin Hoffman, NDIA Chief Executive Officer, Council Members and Expert Adviser.

From the Council's Principal Member

The Principal Member confirmed that the Council will provide out of session feedback into the NDIA's Corporate Plan for 2021-2025.

The Principal Member noted the [Building Better Homes, A National Building Code for All Australians \(external\)](#) campaign, on increasing the supply of accessible housing, is in line with the Council's December 2020 submission to the National Disability Strategy Outcomes Framework.

Mr Hoffman updated Council on the NDIA's priority reform work. This includes the consultation on Independent Assessments, legislative reform, and budgetary reform. He said that NDIS spending remains a real challenge for the NDIA in balancing its responsibilities under the Act and the needs of the community.

The Principal Member and Mr Hoffman welcomed sector issue reports from Members and the Expert Advisor, saying that they highlight significant issues among the communities, geographical areas and population groups that Council works with. Of these matters, issues with accessible housing and disability workforce shortages prevail.

Mr Hoffman welcomed feedback from Members and Council's Expert Advisor, who commended the way NDIS staff have professionally managed public consultations.

Council's formal advice

Council discussed the development of its formal advice, including its advice on:

- Local Area Coordination (LAC), which will be submitted to the NDIA Board in late February 2021; and
- Participant Safety, which will be submitted to the NDIA Board in April 2021.

The advice on Participant Safety outlines an approach to help participants, their families, and carers develop personal safeguards to enable them to live a full life safely, through active citizenship and belonging to community.

This advice aligns with the NDIA Quality and Safeguarding Framework, and Council Members agreed with the direction of the recommendations. The advice will be endorsed out of session by Council, before being presented to the NDIA Board and the Minister for the NDIS.

Progress on Independent Assessments (IA)

Sarah Johnson, NDIA Scheme Actuary, shared information on the personalised budget tool (PBT) that will be used as part of the NDIA's Scheme reforms.

The PBT is a budget model or complex calculator that will help the NDIA:

- make more consistent decisions about the money in participant plans
- use information about a participant, including their circumstances, functional capacity and support needs, to provide a plan budget estimate.

Council Members were invited to assist the NDIA with the PBT pilot through their Independent Assessment Subgroup, and voiced their concerns on:

- unconscious bias in the weighting of funding decisions
- Government oversight into the lives of participants
- draft plans needing amendments, or a type of 'cooling off period' for plans
- culturally appropriate assessments.

Dr Sam Bennett, NDIA General Manager, Policy, Advice and Research, said that the IA consultation continues to be a major focus for the Agency. As part of its public consultation work, the Agency has been focusing on:

- receiving and processing [submissions on the IA consultation papers \(external\)](#)
- delivering up to over 150 community engagement events around IAs
- finalising the review of the NDIS Act with Department of Social Services, which is due March 2021
- goal setting to meet individual needs, including participants with complex support needs
- the budget design process and methodology for setting personalised budgets
- quality assurance framework for IAs
- workforce implications around allied health
- other service design and policy that are linked to the IAs.

Over the coming months, the Council's Subgroup will be deeply engaged by the NDIA to assist with its Scheme reform. Dr Bennett thanked the additional Members who expressed their interest to help the Scheme Actuary with the PBT as part of its IA Subgroup.

Update on the NDIS approach to psychosocial disability

Gerry Naughtin, NDIA Strategic Adviser, Mental Health and Psychosocial Disability, updated the Council on the NDIS's approach to psychosocial disability. He said that the overall feedback on the NDIS progress around psychosocial disability is positive, while acknowledging there is still work to be done.

He noted that there are over 44,000 people with primary psychosocial disability in the NDIS, with 10,000 new participants entering the Scheme in the past 12 months. Mr Naughtin will seek the Council's input in the development of the NDIA's National Psychosocial Disability Framework.

Council Members voiced their concerns on:

- the increase in mental health issues linked to youth and adolescents, including the precarious nature of work for young people, housing instability, lack of child psychologists in certain local government areas
- the pay rate and skills of a Psychosocial Recovery Coach as compared to a Support Coordinator
- NDIS linkage with justice liaison officers in the criminal justice system
- participants with psychosocial disability as a secondary disability and how their needs are met.

More information on the Council

The Council will next meet on 19 March 2021. You can find out more about Council meetings at the [Council's website meeting page \(external\)](#). You can access previous papers and advice from the [Council's website advice page \(external\)](#).

In line with the Council's commitment to accessibility, an Easy Read version of this Bulletin will be released seven days after this Bulletin is published.