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Meeting bulletin – 24 August 2022

This bulletin summarises the Independent Advisory Council's (Council) recent meeting. Ms Leah Van Poppel, who is [Council's Principal Member](#), chaired the meeting held on 24 August 2022.

From Council's Principal Member

The Principal Member noted progress on Council's Advice on behaviour supports for the National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA) Board. This is one of the two Advice reports currently under development. The other piece of advice relates to equity and inclusion. The Principal Member also noted recent engagement with the NDIA about progressing the NDIS Guides for Understanding Supports.

From NDIA's CEO

Dr Lisa Studdert is the Acting Chief Executive Officer (CEO) at the NDIA. Dr Studdert acknowledged that the Australian Government would announce the Terms of Reference for the planned review of the NDIS soon. Dr Studdert noted work currently underway by the NDIA that aligns with the Minister for the NDIS's key priorities, including:

- establishing a team to reduce Administrative Appeals Tribunal (AAT) cases. Noting NDIA's efforts are already showing a reduction in the AAT backlog and in new cases.
- working with hospitals and health jurisdictions to improve hospital discharge for NDIS participants. Particularly for participants with psychosocial disability.
- using a dedicated taskforce and a holistic approach to help address fraud in the NDIS.

Council Members' community reports

[Council Members](#) and the [Expert Adviser](#) reported on matters for the NDIA's attention. Council provides these reports on behalf of people with disability in their communities, to engage with the NDIA CEO and staff. The community reports include:

Home and living

- Concerns were raised about home modification approval delays. The NDIA is currently working to make the approval process easier for participants.

- It was reported that there is confusion in the community about Short Term Accommodation (STA). The NDIA is currently working on a STA Policy and Operational Guideline.
- There were concerns raised about the increased development in Specialist Disability Accommodation (SDA) as apartments and not other design categories. Associated concerns about a lack of participant understanding of SDA design standards and what appears to be a reduction in the number of new SDA builds.
- The need for a step-down approach in situations where a participant needs to move out of their own home, and into shared accommodation, when their parent(s)/sole carer dies.
- There needs to be a continued focus on reducing the number of younger people living in residential aged care (YIPRAC). This is in keeping with the [YIPRAC Strategy 2020-2025](#).

NDIS access and planning

- Continued reports about plan funding reductions, lengthy delays for NDIS plan approvals, participants receiving reviewed plans without consultation, and an increase in the removal of plan management from plans.
- Continued challenges with inconsistency in funding for behaviour support and a lack of quality providers for implementation.
- Reports that the high cost and delays in assessments is preventing some participants from accessing the NDIS. The NDIA is considering this concern as part of Information Gathering for Access and Planning co-design project.
- Concerns that participants are continuing to experience long hospital discharge delays due to delays in plan reviews and lack of suitable accommodation. The NDIA advised they have appointed a Strategic Advisor for Health to assist with the hospital interface.
- There were reports that some acute hospital patients cannot access NDIS plan funding to help with their support needs.

NDIS service and supports

- NDIA State Managers and Agency staff show a strong commitment to working with people with disability.
- A shortage of allied health professionals continues to result in delays for early intervention for children. For example, speech pathology, occupational therapy, paediatricians, and psychologists. Participants in rural and remote areas cannot utilise their plans and funding due to thin markets/lack of local services.
- The coronavirus pandemic is still impacting some people about safe care or access to services/support workers.
- Reports about a continued lack of awareness about how the NDIS and justice system works together in different states and territories. Especially for young people with disability in detention.
- Some participants living with complex and/or many disabilities need better support from the broader service system not just NDIS. For example, or health, education, justice.



- Concerns that businesses use sharp practice, charging a higher fee for NDIS participants.
- There was interest in the work related to Australian Disability Enterprises noting the Department of Social Services is leading this work.

Providers

- Reports of innovative services being introduced by providers is encouraging for participants.
- Some local area coordinators (LAC) seem to be encouraging parents to be nominees. This results in the person with disability having less control and say in their lives and less opportunity for capacity building. Improving nominee process is part of the co-design project currently underway on supported decision making.

Update on NDIA co-design work & NDISreview

Ms Van Poppel noted the [progress of co-design projects](#), which Council Members are currently represented on through various Steering Committees. Ms Van Poppel highlighted one of the current co-design projects to develop a policy on Supported Decision Making. Council Members noted:

- The Supported Decision Making Steering Committee participant representatives play an important role in providing valuable insights about the challenges the most vulnerable participants face to make decisions.
- All information about decision support should be easy to understand and available in accessible formats. Everyone should understand how to use the NDIS and how the NDIS can support them.
- NDIA should consider ways to educate participants about the NDIS planning process, and how to set and achieve their goals.
- The NDIA has recently released information to help decision support, including the [Guide for Employment Supports](#), the [plan implementation directory](#), and [participant booklets](#).
- The Co-design Steering Committees help build the next generation of disability advocates.
- It is important for all seven Co-design Steering Committees to collaborate and share information. This will help with understanding priorities and themes that cut across all projects.

NDIA Remote/Very Remote current state snapshot

Council received a current snapshot of the challenges faced in rural and remote areas. The NDIA discussed their work to address key problem areas faced by people with disability in remote/very remote areas. Council agreed to regular engagement with the NDIA on these issues and to inform the Remote Very Remote Strategy.

Council Members noted that some regional areas face the same challenges with thin markets as remote and very remote. Council Members suggested the NDIA should consider a dedicated action plan and strategy for thin markets in regional areas. Council Members suggested the NDIA needs to develop culturally safe protocols or policy about First Nations and culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) community members who provide care. It was noted that at times this is kinship care and that NDIA



policies do not currently support family members providing paid supports. NDIA were encouraged to consider the operational barriers that continue to be faced by these cohorts to access NDIS, supports, and payment for services.

Update on NDIA Research and Evaluation

The NDIA's Research and Evaluation Branch recapped its work from 2019 to 2022. Council Members provided their feedback on Research and Evaluation's proposed Strategy for 2022-2027.

Council Members noted the importance of collaboration with the international research community and the need for NDIA's research agenda to address issues that are unique to Australia, including First Nations and CALD challenges. Members highlighted the importance of employing people with disability as researchers and for governance positions.

More information on Council

Council will next meet on 21 September 2022. Find out more about Council meetings and bulletins at the [Council's website](#). You can also access advice from the [Council's website](#).

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