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## Meeting bulletin – 27 July 2022

This bulletin summarises the recent meeting of the Independent Advisory Council (Council) to the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS). Leah Van Poppel, who is [Council's Principal Member \(external\)](#), chaired the meeting held on 27 July 2022

### From Council's Principal Member

The Principal Member welcomed Dr Lisa Studdert. Dr Studdert is the Acting Chief Executive Officer (CEO) at the National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA). The Principal Member acknowledged the contribution of Dr Denis Naphine, former NDIA Board Chair. She welcomed Mr Jim Minto, who is now the Acting NDIA Board Chair.

### From NDIA Board Chair & NDIA CEO

Mr Minto said the NDIA Board is focused on the next phase of the NDIS' development. The NDIA Board wants to ensure quality and consistent outcomes for participants. They are also looking at appointing a permanent CEO for the NDIA.

Dr Studdert said there was a sense of renewal and optimism with the new government. Dr Studdert has been meeting regularly with Minister Shorten about the status of the NDIS. Dr Studdert said the planned review of the NDIS will be a significant and comprehensive piece of work. The review will need respectful and constructive engagement with the sector. Dr Studdert noted other focus work for the NDIA includes:

- implementing interim measures to improve hospital discharge,
- finding ways to resolve plan reviews to improve participant experience, avoiding the current volume of Administrative Appeals Tribunal cases,
- addressing fraud, and
- the COVID-19 response.

### Council Members' community reports

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

- Some people with intellectual disability who have had NDIS supports for several years say they have good plans, are running small businesses and/or have jobs, and are doing tertiary studies. At the same time, others report that it is hard to understand and navigate the NDIS. Some people cannot read their NDIS plans and do not know what their plan allows.
- Reports about funding reductions leaving some participants fearing plan reviews. Also, reports of lengthy delays for NDIS plan approvals.
- Sometimes participants get NDIS plan decisions via letter, which forces a participant to contact the NDIS to discuss the letter.
- Continuing concerns around the high cost of assessments to access the NDIS, especially for children with autism.
- Recently released information by the NDIA on plan reassessments and variations has not been well understood and/or received by some in the community. The tone of language used in the [When would we decide not to do a plan reassessment? \(external\)](#) should be improved.
- While the community welcomes improvements to NDIS operational guidelines, there should be more communication on the reasons for changes and related consultations.
- Continued challenges with hospital discharge. Reports that people experience longer hospitalisation due to poor communication between hospitals and NDIS services.
- The coronavirus pandemic still makes it hard for some people to access services/support workers.
- Some participants in remote areas, especially First Nations people, are unable to use their NDIS funds because there are no services available where they live.
- The removal of level three high intensity supports from [NDIS pricing arrangements \(external\)](#) may make it harder for people to find providers and get supports.
- Some participants want more information about how the NDIS determined the price of services in the [NDIS pricing arrangements \(external\)](#). People who self-manage want to know how the new prices may impact their funding.
- Council queried whether recent NDIA consultations and/or [Have your say \(external\)](#) surveys, especially those a part of co-design, are reaching diverse communities and those that speak languages other than English. The NDIA is contracting with disability representative and carer organisations to run focus groups as part of co-design to ensure that diverse voices are heard, including First Nations and Culturally and Linguistically Diverse communities.
- Reports there are fewer providers willing to give supports to people with complex, behavioural support needs and/or episodic psychosocial conditions.
- Reports of a skills shortage for complex care pathways staff, which delays resolving complex scenarios by a provider and/or NDIA.
- Increased reports that some NDIS providers in central Australia are entering into guardianship arrangement with participants, which presents issues around choice and control.
- Some providers report an increase in women with disability requesting housing and supports to escape domestic and/or family violence.
- There is a need for NDIS training for occupational therapists, especially for those that deal with home modifications.



- Challenges with specialist disability accommodation (SDA) funding, supply, and dwellings, highlights processes need to be more efficient, clear, and responsive.
- Issues for some supported independent living (SIL) providers around a one-off COVID-19 support payment.
- Some communities want new advocacy services for people with disability across Australia. For example, to explore Information, Linkages and Capacity Building program grants related to home and living.

## Update on NDIA co-design work

Ms Van Poppel noted the [progress of co-design projects \(external\)](#) and activity underway to co-design and develop a policy on home and living. The Home and Living Steering Committee has advocated that this work must ensure inclusion of under-represented groups and regular public updates. Council Members said:

- There is positive sentiment about the NDIA's work on co-design. This extends to the co-design activities for home and living that are being facilitated by disability advocate Natalie Wade. At the same time, Members stressed that NDIA's dedicated co-design projects must only progress after co-design happens.
- The home and living co-design work should consider the different concepts and/or definitions of a home that exist, especially for First Nations people. This work should also consider inclusion of young people in residential aged care and children/young people.
- The NDIA must continuously engage with those involved and include under-represented communities.
- The NDIA must align its feedback from co-design activities with [the NDIA Engagement Framework \(DOCX 4.7MB\)](#). This applies to work done on the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and the Remote and Very Remote strategy.
- Council members would want more transparent communications sent to the community from the NDIA and NDIS Minister about how co-design is progressing.

## Update on NDIA operations

Jeremy Dean, Deputy CEO of Participant Experience Delivery Division, NDIA, updated on operations and work done to improve productivity. Council Members said:

- The NDIA's work to improve productivity is benefiting the NDIS and participant outcomes.
- As the NDIS matures, participants need to be supported to better establish goals, not just to implement their plans.
- Members asked about draft plans, especially for new NDIS participants. Draft plans, along with staff training and systems improvement may minimise human error that hinders plan development. NDIA confirmed this will be picked up in co-design.
- NDIA's service delivery improvements must help with challenges for plans in home and living.



## NDIA work to share plans with Plan Managers

NDIA Representatives from the Market Intervention and Commissioning Branch provided information on the requirements around sharing participant plans with Plan Managers. Council Members noted:

- The need for future communications about sharing plans from the NDIA to highlight the reason for changes.
- Any changes to requirements should focus on compliance and payment integrity, and Plan Managers' responsibility to support a participant to manage their funds 'in accordance with a participant's plan'.
- The NDIA should promote its definition of 'in accordance with a participant's plan', found in the [Guide to self-management \(PDF 812KB\)](#).
- The NDIA should consider that people with disability must often share their information, and it is hard for them to maintain any level of privacy. This included consideration for participants to share only part of their plan.
- The NDIA should consider participants who are under guardianship, particularly financial guardianship, and the intersection of this with current work.
- Sharing information with Plan Managers must not erode choice and control and/or disempower participants.
- The NDIA should consider its systems and processes for how participants can control a change of Plan Manager.

## Update on Council Work Plan

Ms Van Poppel continued discussions about Council's Work Plan for 2022-23. This included priority areas of work to include for the upcoming year. Council Members gave feedback about the draft priority work areas under consideration. Members said the Work Plan should include:

- the principles the Council operates under and the intention for all its work to be underpinned by, for example capacity building, quality services, and a whole of life approach for all Australians across the country.
- Council's work on co-design and the ways Council has agreed to engage with stakeholders.

## More information on Council

Council will next meet on 24 August 2022. Find out more about Council meetings and bulletins at the [Council's website \(external\)](#). You can also access advice from the [Council's website \(external\)](#).

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