

Independent Advisory Council Meeting Bulletin 9 September 2020

The Independent Advisory Council (Council) to the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) was established to bring the participant's voice to the heart of the NDIS. The Council provides independent advice to the National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA) Board, as outlined in the NDIS Act 2013.

This Bulletin provides an overview of the topics discussed at the Council's 9 September 2020 meeting. Ms Robyn Kruk AO, Principal Member, chaired the meeting, which was attended by Council Members and Council's Expert Adviser.

Coronavirus (COVID-19) update

Mr Martin Hoffman, NDIA Chief Executive Officer, led updates on the NDIA's response to Stage 4 restrictions in Victoria, acknowledging the restrictions have been especially tough for people with disability. He highlighted positive news that COVID-19 infections among Victorian participants remain relatively low at less than 20 active cases, and trending downward. Outside Victoria, currently, there are currently no participants who are COVID positive. Mr Hoffman said this shows that infection control has been well managed by NDIS participants, their families, carers and providers.

Mr Hoffman acknowledged Council's concerns and challenges related to young people in residential aged care and participants in Supported Residential Services (SRS), noting the NDIA is actively engaged with the State government in this area.

Independent Assessments

Dr Sam Bennett, General Manager Policy, Advice & Research, provided an update on independent assessments (IA). Dr Bennett acknowledged the Council's and public's concerns about the changes, saying that the Agency is working to deliver more information on IA through accessible and clear communications.

IAs were originally recommended by the Productivity Commission, at the beginning of the Scheme's, and more recently by the NDIS Act Review (Tune Review), and were also announced as part of the Minister's Plan for the NDIS in November 2019. Dr Bennett said that the IAs will help the NDIA have a holistic view of a person's ability to live an ordinary life. It aims to create a level playing field for access and reduce the anxiety around planning. He added that IA changes aim to improve consistency, equity, plan flexibility, participant experience and outcomes and Scheme sustainability. The IAs will be progressively rolled out from February 2021.

The Principal Member asked all Council Members and Expert Advisor for their feedback, and there was a discussion on:

- Supports for participants with complex needs and with guardians and nominees
- The Corporate Plan priority to address support for decision making
- Re-traumatisation and anxiety for participants and the need to use supplementary information to avoid 're-telling your story'

- Importance of all information being available in accessible formats and in Easy Read
- Importance of building a skilled workforce to implement the IA
- Considerations and impacts for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.
- Operation of reviews and appeals
- Positive impact of IAs on families of children and young people with disability

The NDIA committed to increasing dialogue and engagement with Council and the sector on this matter.

Council's focus for 2020-21

Discussions on Council's priorities for 2020-21 carried over from last month's Council meeting, held 20 August 2020. Council agreed on its self-identified priorities for formal advice for the year, which will be included in Council's work plan for 2020-21. To best inform its advice, Council also discussed the new focus for its Reference Groups.

In addition to the priorities for formal advice, Council's 2020-21 work plan will be supplemented by any advice priorities identified by the NDIA Board (as per [Council's Operating Model](#)), advice already in progress, committed informal advice and Council's communications priorities.

The 2020-21 Council work plan will be endorsed by Council out of session and presented to Hon. Stuart Robert MP, Minister for the NDIS, at the Council's October 2020 meeting.

Next meetings

The Council will next meet on 15 October 2020.

You can access previous papers and advice from the Independent Advisory Council to the NDIS on the Council's website: <https://www.ndis-iac.com.au/meetings>.