

## **Independent Advisory Council Meeting Bulletin 22 June 2021**

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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 22 June 2021 meeting, led by Ms Robyn Kruk AO, Principal Member. Dr Helen Nugent AO, NDIA Board Chair, and Mr Martin Hoffman, NDIA Chief Executive Officer (CEO), also attended the meeting with:

- Council Members
- Council's Expert Adviser
- NDIA Representatives and Council Secretariat.

### **From the Principal Member**

The Principal Member thanked Council Members for their commitment to:

- work through complex Scheme reforms issues, including Independent Assessments (IAs).
- respond to the request from the NDIA Board and Senator the Hon Linda Reynolds CSC, Minister for the NDIS, for Council's advice.

She noted that the Minister for the NDIS and the NDIA Board have sought Council's advice and consultation with the disability community and other stakeholders to understand the issues.

The Principal Member also thanked Members who'd taken part in:

- the Scheme Reform Forum, held in Sydney on 10-11 June.
- engagement meetings with Disability Representative Organisations.
- workshops across Australia, to hear the views of state and territory disability groups.

She acknowledged the work of Council's Members and Consultant under tight timelines to:

- consider the feedback from the engagement and consultations.
- develop Council's formal advice, including recommendations on a way forward for Scheme reforms.

### **From the NDIA Board Chair and NDIA CEO**

The Board Chair acknowledged:

- Council's work under tight timelines to both engage in consultations and develop its important advice on Scheme reforms.

- NDIA management's hard work and commitment to transparency and information sharing, as part of the Scheme reform consultation process.

The NDIA CEO also acknowledged Council's commitment, stressing that its work on Scheme reform consultations and advice is of great importance to the Agency. He committed to providing more information in the future about:

- the sustainability pressures facing the Scheme.
- how IAs will be used to develop a participant's personalised budget.
- the IA pilot evaluation.

### **Council Member's views on Scheme reform consultations**

Council Members and Expert Adviser gave their views on the Scheme reform engagement process, noting the tight timelines for Council's advice.

They said that state and territory consultations:

- facilitated respectful and constructive discussions on Scheme reforms.
- showed that the NDIA is genuinely listening to the disability communities' concerns on Scheme reforms, and wants to rebuild trust.
- could be improved by including more participants with lived experience and information on personalised budgets. It was agreed that the States and Territories would be asked to do this.

### **Next steps for Council's advice on Scheme reforms**

Once state and territory consultations end, Council will consider the advice and feedback received to prepare its formal advice.

Council will then give its formal advice on Scheme reforms to the NDIA Board and Minister for the NDIS, for discussion at the Disability Reform Ministers meeting in early-July. The Council will also make the nature of its advice available through its website in line with usual practice.

### **Council Members' snapshot of issues**

Council Members and the Expert Adviser also reported on concerns they'd heard from people with disability in their communities to bring these to the Agency's attention, including:

- Inadequate decision-making supports for people with disability.
- Concerns around single occupancy Specialist Disability Accommodation (SDA) approvals, and shortages in SDA availability.
- Increased reports of long delays between plan review meetings and plan approvals. Concerns that some NDIS participants, especially younger people with intellectual, have their funding cut at plan review.
- The need to address the impact the NDIS is having on the early childhood intervention sector and best practice.

- The need for the NDIS to help people in the justice system access the NDIS, and understand the NDIS funded supports that will help them when they move out of these settings.
- The need to look at service accessibility in rural and remote areas.
- The need for transparent, proactive and regular communications and engagement between Council, the NDIA, and state and territory disability councils.
- Ongoing NDIS equity issues for women with disability.
- Concerns about what the end of the [National Community Connectors Program](#) means for:
  - Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people
  - Culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) communities.
- The importance of the Department of the Social Services' [Information, Linkages and Capacity Building \(ILC\) program](#) in Queensland, given limited investment in support for people with disability in the state's budget.
- Systemic workforce issues, including delayed disability worker screening checks and worker shortages.

## Council 2021-22 Work Plan and priorities

The Principal Member noted the priorities of the Council Reference Groups priorities, and their link to Council's 2021-22 Work Plan. The Work Plan also aims to align with the NDIA Corporate Plan 2021-2025 and any priorities identified by the NDIA Board.

The Principal Member acknowledged the work of Reference Group Co-Chairs to progress their priorities, and asked Council Members to confirm their priorities out of session. This will inform discussions with the Board on the identification of priorities for Council's formal and informal advice, before finalising the Work Plan at the July Council meeting.

## More information on the Council

The Council next meets on 27 July 2021. You can find out more about Council meetings at the [Council's website meeting page \(external\)](#). You can access advice from the [Council's website advice page \(external\)](#).

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