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Reference Group meeting bulletin – 3 May 2023

Home and Living Reference Group

This Bulletin summarises the recent meeting of the [Home and Living Reference Group](#) (Reference Group). The Reference Group gives advice to the Independent Advisory Council (Council) to the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS). Its advice focuses on home and living supports for people with disability.

The Reference Group met on 3 May 2023 via video conference. [Ms Leah van Poppel](#), Council Principal Member and Reference Group Co-chair led the meeting. [Dr Leighton Jay, Council Member and Reference Group Co-chair](#) supported Ms van Poppel at the meeting.

From the Reference Group Co-chair

Ms van Poppel noted the work the Council and Reference Group Members have done since their last meeting [on 9 November 2022 \(DOCX 84KB\)](#).

What Members have heard in their community

Reference Group Members reported on matters for the NDIA's attention, relating to:

NDIS access and planning

- Advocates say that some participants and nominees still do not understand how the NDIA determines reasonable and necessary supports, because of inconsistent decision making and unclear funding decision explanations.
- While the NDIA maintains that it does not negotiate plan budgets with participants, one of the central tenets of the NDIS is for participants to engage in a two-way process with a planner about the supports they need to achieve their goals.
- Reports that some service providers charge the greatest amount stipulated in the NDIS Pricing Arrangements and Price Limits, regardless of individual circumstances for support. This causes budgetary issues for participants and the NDIS.

- Some people with psychosocial disability face difficulty becoming NDIS participants and getting the right supports, due to lack of understanding about psychosocial disability.
- Feedback that plans should use plain English, not bureaucratic jargon that does not reflect the participant's voice.
- The NDIA should clearly communicate with participants about their plan at plan reviews, to avoid significant issues for participants around future supports. For example, plan rollovers that impact supports.
- Reports that internal review/review of a reviewable decisions meetings are sometimes cancelled with no reason.

NDIS service and supports

- The NDIA should explore certain circumstances where participants with complex needs and authorised restrictive practices in place, may be better supported by unregistered providers.
- There are challenges that come from the current NDIS Pricing Arrangements and Price Limits. Specifically, the lack of clear information around charging for non face-to-face supports in a participant's personal budget.
- Issues with variations for children leaving state care. This relates to different approaches used across child protection workers in different jurisdictions, local area coordinators (LAC) or early childhood partners. Staff changes impact a child protection worker's ability to access timely information to help at risk children.
- Some participants feel disempowered to change planners and speak up. Many feel like they have no say in choosing supports that make them feel safe.
- The Agency is doing some good work to find better ways to support planning teams to promote the use of tailored Assistive Technology for people with disability.

NDIS home and living supports

- Reports of continued lack of appropriate accommodation and housing, particularly core and cluster styles. The availability of which may help with the overall shortage of individual accommodation, especially among people with psychosocial disability.
- Calls for more information about home and living arrangements after hospital discharge, specifically for younger people with disability. Reports of a communication breakdown between the health system and NDIS.
- Calls for consistency around quality of supports in specialist disability accommodation (SDA) and supported independent living (SIL). Includes decisions by the NDIA about these supports which reportedly mostly impact First Nations people.
- Calls for the NDIA to acknowledge the risk of homelessness for people with disability and work closely with states and territories and mainstream services to address the issue.
- Some participants do not speak up about planning decisions for home and living supports because they fear they will face further plan reductions.



- Challenges around participants exiting SDA and the impacts on others in that accommodation, especially relating to continuous nursing care for people with complex needs. Some people with SDA who have lived independently are being moved into group home settings.
- Concerns related to the current SDA pricing review relating to the possibility that the NDIA will include some overly optimistic assumptions that may underestimate the cost of SDA developments. This will have a disproportionately large impact on SDA providers trying to develop bespoke solutions with participants.
- Calls for individualised living option (ILO) supports and funding bands to increase with indexation to reflect increased costs. SIL received a 9% increase in the last pricing review while ILO got none.

NDIA Home and Living Demonstration Projects update

The NDIA updated the Reference Group on its Home and Living Demonstration Projects and the next phase of the projects around capacity building. Members gave the following feedback:

- Relaxation of project guidelines may allow for more participant engagement, noting that participants will not engage with the NDIA without established trust.
- Calls for the NDIA to put the participant experience at the centre of its work to drive better project outcomes.
- The time needed for providers to be a part of the project has in turn impacted participant engagement with the project.
- Risk that only providers give their view on potential solutions when participants should lead and drive innovation.

NDIA Home and Living Framework and Implementation Plan update

The NDIA thanked the Reference Group and Council Members for their valuable work since November 2022 to refine the Home and Living Framework and Implementation Plan. The NDIA presented an update about the work and Members gave the following feedback:

- Members welcomed changes in terms used in the Framework but cautioned use of the term 'home and living budget'.
- The Framework needs to clarify the role of an adult guardian in making decisions about a person's supports, including home and living needs.
- Members questioned NDIA home and living navigator operationalisation and ways to complement existing supports.
- Other services and supports that interact with the NDIS, like the Office of the Public Guardian, need to work together to support the rights of participants and families.
- The Framework should include matters around intersectoral collaboration, housing supply, and homelessness.



- The information the NDIA shares about the Framework and the Implementation Plan needs to be accessible for all to understand.

Shaping Council's priorities for the NDIS Review

Reference Group members discussed Council's drafted priority issues and themes for the NDIS Review to consider as part of its work. Members noted:

- That Council's proposed themes for submission to the Review align with the Reference Group Members priority NDIS development areas. Some of these themes include NDIA communications, consultation and co-design and home and living.
- Council's engagement with the NDIS Review may benefit from learnings from [Purple Orange's NDIS Conversation Series](#), which aims to stimulate conversations about the future of the NDIS.
- The Review needs to be a participant-focused assessment of pressing NDIS issues, accompanied by practical solutions.
- Choice and control and flexible supports for participants should underpin Council's priority issues.

More information on the Reference Group

The Home and Living Reference Group will next meet on Monday 26 June 2023. Find out more about Reference Group meetings and bulletins at [Council's website](#). You can also access [Council's advice here](#).

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