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Meeting bulletin – 15 December 2022

This bulletin summarises the Independent Advisory Council's (Council) recent meeting. Council gives advice to the National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA) Board. Council's advice aims to improve the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS). Ms Leah van Poppel, who is [Council's Principal Member](#), chaired the final meeting for the year, held on 15 December 2022.

Update from Council's Principal Member

Ms Leah van Poppel acknowledged recent Council work and meetings held. This included a meeting with the NDIS Quality and Safeguards Commission (NDIS Commission). Council will continue to work with the Commission about the quality of registered providers.

Update from the NDIA

Kurt Fearnley AO, NDIA Board Chairperson, restated the expertise and value Council adds to the NDIS. He provided an overview of recent meetings he has attended, as well as media interviews he has been a part of.

Ms Rebecca Falkingham, NDIA Chief Executive Officer (CEO), restated a willingness to work with Council Members. She noted NDIA priorities since becoming CEO and progress made. This included work to address deficit language about people with disability in the media and NDIA recruitment processes to improve the representation of people with disability. She noted NDIA achievements across fraud, the rollout of the PACE business system, pilots for thin markets, as well as processes for home modification, hospital discharge and the Administrative Appeals Tribunal.

Council Members' community reports

[Council Members](#) and the [Expert Adviser](#) reported on matters for the NDIA's attention. Members provides these reports on behalf of people with disability in their communities. The reports give the NDIA CEO and staff understanding about issues from the ground. They also give the NDIA the opportunity to respond to themes, concerns, and opportunities raised by Members. Key matters Members noted this month included:



Disability community

- Positive feedback from the disability community about [Council's Work Plan for 2022-23](#).
- A reported lack of visibility of the NDIS Commission in the disability community. This includes information about the Commission's role in helping participants and referral processes for participants. There is also misinformation in the community about the Commission's role in cuts to personal care supports.
- The NDIS Workforce Capability Framework is an important resource. It may help participants learn about the skills and knowledge expected of workers funded under the NDIS.

NDIA operations

- There is an opportunity for the NDIA's work on fraud to focus on those groups that are most marginalised. This includes those from cultural and linguistic diverse (CALD) backgrounds and women with disability.
- There is an opportunity for the NDIA to be the leader in employment of people with disability. This includes those with intellectual disability. Council will work with the NDIA to get more data about the number of people with intellectual disability employed at the NDIA.
- The importance of Council engagement with the NDIA's First Nations Advisory Group, which is currently being set up.
- An interest in understanding the number of COVID-related deaths of NDIS participants.

NDIS supports

- People with disability need employment supports at different stages in their life, not only in their younger years. This issue will be represented in Council's advice "Participants who are ageing".
- Organisations and government agencies that give jobs to people with disability must be more inclusive. Especially around plain English and Easy Read.
- Challenges with support workers, including the lack of training for support workers to properly support people with disability who experience psychosocial disability/mental health issues.
- Challenges with local area coordinators, including lack of training or expertise to properly support people with disability.
- Reports of difficulties for parents of children with disability accessing accessible playgrounds. This is because some council's reportedly lock playgrounds due to vandalism concerns. Local councils should be aware of the logistical challenges faced by parents to get children to accessible playgrounds.
- Reports that there is a lack of consistent practice by the NDIA to transition children who are six years to the next part of the NDIS.
- Concern around the costs associated with diagnostic services for children with disability, who need evidence to enter the NDIS. There are reports of sharp practice happening in this area.
- Concern around the way in which the NDIA exits children from the NDIS. This sometimes without warning or a step-down approach to transition therapy and supports.

NDIS planning

- Ongoing concern for those participants who face plan reductions.
- Concern that three-year plans do not fund the whole three-year period. For example, one year of speech therapy in a three-year plan.
- Challenges in self-management, specifically where a participant plan changes from self-management to plan management without consultation, or a participant is not informed that it is a reviewable decision.
- Concerns around provider behaviour, where some providers submit many invoices with same services on same dates.
- Positive outcomes around a proactive community-based approach to planning in parts of northern Australia.

Home and living

- Issues with a surge of private investors in parts of northern Australia looking to establish specialist disability accommodation (SDA) that replicates aged care settings and does not give participants choice and control about where they live.
- Some SDA under construction is not built in areas that people with disability want to live. Builders should consult with the disability community before they start SDA constructions.

Update on NDIA co-design work

Ms van Poppel asked for feedback on the [progress of co-design projects](#) that Council Members are working on. Members highlighted the NDIA's work on Supported Decision Making that has showcased authentic engagement and a willingness to work in partnership with the disability community, including involving the right people and/or organisations in co-design. Council Members also shared feedback on progress of the Participant Safety co-design and will discuss this more with the NDIA.

Update on Council's advice and work

The Council's Independent Consultant gave an update about advice Council is developing called the 'Voice of children and young people'. Members were also updated on the 'Operationalising Intersectionality' guide, which will help Council apply an intersectional lens to its work to ensure the NDIS is inclusive and safe for all people with disability.

Council Members noted the advice about the 'Voice of Children and Young People' should:

- Represent a young person's NDIS journey from infancy to adulthood, including ways to support their employment.
- Include ways to support parents to support their child's voice, including supported decision making.
- Improve the language used in the advice around parent capability.



- Reinforce the original intent and role of a local area coordinator in a young participant's life.
- Make connections to children's rights as part of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and Australia's Disability Strategy.
- Highlight the need for a whole of government approach to supports whereby the NDIS is not seen as the only way to support children and young people.
- Reinforce that the over prescription of developmental therapies for children and associated funding does not always lead to good outcomes or community connection.

Council Members noted the guide about the 'Operationalising intersectionality' should:

- Address the impact of trauma and intergenerational trauma.
- Use case studies and real-life stories to help people understand what the guide is about.
- Include a plain English version makes content more accessible to a wider range of people, including people with disability and those whose first language is not English.

Update on NDIA work on complex supports

The NDIA gave an update about its improvement work for Younger People in Residential Aged Care and [hospital discharge](#). Council Members gave their feedback about the NDIA's work on complex supports, including:

- General positive sentiment around the NDIA's improvements in hospital discharge.
- The need to understand data around young people with early onset dementia who transition from hospital and those forensic patients awaiting hospital discharge.
- How the NDIA agreed on its 30-day target to approve a NDIS hospital discharge plan, when the disability community was calling on shorter timeframes.
- Concern about where participants go when they leave the hospital. For example, the NDIA sometimes puts participants that leave hospital in accommodation that is not appropriate.
- Referencing the Victorian Disability Hospital Liaison Officer model, which has delivered better outcomes and support for people with disability in accessing health services.
- The need for information about complex supports to be in plain English and Easy Read.
- Suggestions that hospitals and the NDIA could look at health passports for participants. These passports have information about a participant's health and preferences that belongs to them. For example, participants choose to write what they want a health professional to know about themselves in the passport.

More information on Council

Council will next meet on 22 February 2023. Find out more about Council meetings and bulletins at the [Council's website](#). You can also access advice from the [Council's website](#).

Council publishes an Easy Read version of this bulletin. This is part of its commitment to accessibility.