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Reference Group meeting bulletin – 29 August 2022

Home and Living Reference Group

This Bulletin summarises the recent meeting of the Home and Living Reference Group (Reference Group). The Reference Group met on 29 August 2022.

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 to:

- Live independently.
- Choose where they want to live.
- Do things for themselves in their homes.
- Be included in the community they live.

[Dr Leighton Jay, Council Member and Reference Group Co-chair](#), led the meeting.

From the Reference Group Co-chair

Dr Jay recognised the contributions of the Reference Group to the work of the NDIA. He noted the valuable contribution each Member's experience brings to the NDIA as well as Council. He said this was particularly important in the co-design work the NDIA is doing.

Co-design update

Members got an update on the current co-design activities the NDIA is progressing. This included the work by the dedicated Steering Committees on:

- Support for Decision Making
- Participant Safety, and
- Home and Living.

The Reference Group acknowledged the work done by the NDIA on consultation and engagement. The comprehensive work with the disability community and broader sector is important.



Members noted the importance of engaging directly with participants with complex communication needs. This will help to fully understand their challenges to making decisions and get decision supports.

The Reference Group also stressed the importance of co-design during policy development, implementation, and evaluation, something the Codesign Advisory Group also agrees with.

Members noted the [Australian Guardianship & Administration Council's Conference](#). This conference may add value to the NDIA's work on support for decision making.

In relation to the work of the Home and Living Steering Committee, Members noted:

- The importance of consultation and engagement with culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) communities. This will help better understand the ways cultural impacts shape participant choice. Especially in relation to who they live with and where they want to live.
- The need for participants and their families to understand their home and living support options. There have been some programs in the community that have helped participants and their families create a home and living vision. For example, Partners in Recovery, which is not currently in operation.

Reference Group Members' community reports

Reference Group Members reported on home and living matters for the NDIA's attention. Members provide these reports on behalf of people with disability in their communities, to engage with the NDIA staff. The community reports include:

- Delays in approval of assistive technology, particularly related to home and living supports. Delays are reportedly worse in regional and remote areas.
- Reports regarding confusion and misinformation about Individualised Living Options (ILO), among participants and NDIA staff. Reports that many NDIA staff use ILO as a new Supported Independent Living (SIL) option.
- Reports that participants are being forced into shared accommodation, even when they want to live alone. This is reportedly prevalent in the Northern Territory.
- Reports that participants get offered Specialist Disability Accommodation (SDA) when they do not need it and/or want it. This can reduce the availability of SDA for participants who need it.
- Reports of participants having their plan budgets reduced, without enough information about the decision.
- Commentary concerning a lack of transparency in the NDIA Home and Living Panel decision making. Some participants are reportedly having their supports rejected without explanation about decision making criteria.
- Calls for a whole of government approach to address the delays in hospital discharge for NDIS participants.

Home and living project updates

Specialist Disability Accommodation pricing review

The NDIA briefed the Reference Group Members on the [SDA pricing review](#), announced by the Minister for the NDIS on 22 August 2022. Members noted:

- The ambitious timelines for the review.
- The importance of transparent and comprehensive governance arrangements for the review. The people overseeing the review must represent and understand the needs of people with disability.
- The suggestion to change the name SDA to NDIS funded housing. This is because some people think the word accommodation connotes institutionalism.

Specialist Disability Accommodation operational guideline

The Reference Group received an update on the new [SDA operational guideline](#). Members welcomed the news that SDA is now a long-term funded support. This means participants do not need a reassessment at every plan review. Members' feedback included:

- The need for planners to consider the individual life circumstances of each participant when making decisions about home and living supports. For participants, the 'one size fits all' approach does not work.
- The need for the NDIA to support participants to have an opportunity to explore home and living options and what may be possible for them.
- Pricing issues for short term versus permanent accommodation options.
- Reports that some SDA builders are not meeting the [NDIS Design Standards](#).

Individualised Living Options review

Members received information about the ILO continuous improvement pathway. The Reference Group noted:

- Widespread confusion and misinformation amongst participants and NDIS staff about ILO, SDA and SIL.
- Support for the ILO concept. But the rules and complexities of the ILO operational guidelines discourage participants from pursuing ILO flexibly.
- The need to give participants the opportunity to explore home and living alternatives that may not fit with the ILO, SDA or SIL concept.
- That giving flexibility to participants will bring about innovation and new home and living arrangements that will benefit the NDIS and the community.



NDIS Review discussion

Reference Group Members noted the terms of reference for the NDIS Review are yet to be confirmed. Once Disability Reform Ministers' agree on these terms, Members will have a better understanding of the issues the Review will look at. Members noted:

- Their interest in contributing to the Review, both as individuals and as a Reference Group.
- That the Review may be an opportunity for the disability community to challenge current conventions and present more progressive ideas.
- The need to apply co-design principles to the NDIS Review.

More information on the Reference Group

The Home and Living Reference Group will next meet in November 2022. 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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