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Reference Group meeting bulletin – 18 September 2023

Home and Living Reference Group

The [Home and Living Reference Group](#), known as the Reference Group, recently met via videoconference on September 18, 2023. This bulletin provides an overview of the meeting.

The Reference Group focuses on home and living supports for people with disability. They share their knowledge with the Independent Advisory Council (IAC). The IAC uses this information to give advice to the National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA) Board on the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS).

[Ms Leah van Poppel](#), IAC Principal Member, led the meeting.

From the Reference Group Co-chair

Ms van Poppel acknowledged the dedicated work of the IAC and Reference Group members since their last [meeting on 26 June 2023 \(DOCX 88KB\)](#).

Ms van Poppel also extended a warm welcome to both new and returning Reference Group members, who will actively participate from 1 July 2023 to 31 December 2024. This membership refresh aims to ensure greater inclusion of people with intellectual disability and younger people within the IAC.

The IAC appoints members to its [4 Reference Groups](#) through its own established procedures, following section 157 of the [NDIS Act 2013](#). The IAC will shortly appoint Co-chairs for each Reference Group. The full complement of IAC membership is currently in the final stages of determination by the Minister, following the completion of some IAC members' terms on 30 June 2023.

Ms van Poppel welcomed Ms Samantha Taylor, the NDIA's acting General Manager for Policy, Advice and Research and Ms Chris Faulkner, NDIA's Branch Manager for Home and Living Innovation. They attended to hear the Reference Group's important reports, feedback, and advice, and to provide insights into the NDIA's work related to home and living supports.



What members have heard in their community

Reference Group members conveyed important insights that the NDIA needs to consider, including:

NDIS access and planning

- Some participants have expressed a desire for living on their own but are advised by NDIS planners to live with others with disabilities.
- Members recommended closer collaboration between NDIA home and living decision makers, participants, and their support networks.
- There are reports of long delays for home and living decisions, at times resulting in the participants needing longer stays in hospital or aged care.
- There were concerns that home and living supports are not covered by the [Participant Service Guarantee](#), leaving participants and support workers uncertain about decision timelines.
- There were reports of prolonged delays in approving Independent Living Options (ILO) funding, causing stress for participants and difficulties in expediting the process.
- Suggestions for creating a NDIS service to assist people, particularly those with intellectual disability, brain injury, or psychosocial disabilities, in navigating the NDIS.

NDIS service and supports

- Reports some self-managing participants find it difficult to understand home and living supports.
- Members reported that ILO does not always align with a person's needs, potentially leading participants into ill-suited Supported Independent Living (SIL) or requiring additional [informal support](#).
- Reports of inconsistent and insufficient [price limits](#) for NDIS supports in rural and remote areas.
- Continued reports of limited housing options for people with psychosocial disabilities, especially core-and-cluster housing models.
- Calls for the NDIA to promote creative thinking in home and living supports by sharing more information about innovative models with the community.
- Reports of challenges for parents in finding suitable homes for their children with disabilities due to NDIS-related obstacles and builder concerns.
- Members highlighted the importance of building and funding [Circles of Support \(external\)](#) for people without many informal supports, especially First Nations people and people leaving prisons or hospitals.

NDIS providers and disability community

- Emphasis on fostering partnerships between providers and participants in designing and building home and living supports.



- Concern current practices, policies and payments for home and living support workers lack flexibility for creative and collaborative approaches
- Anxiety in the disability community regarding potential changes arising from the [NDIS Review](#) and [Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People with Disability](#) (Royal Commission).
- There are concerns that some participants and their caregivers fear losing their tailored home and living supports due to potential NDIS changes in response to the NDIS Review and Royal Commission.
- Suggestions for clear and straightforward messaging, free of jargon, for the NDIS Review and Royal Commission outcomes, along with engaging the disability community to gauge their responses to information.

Developing the Reference Group Work Plan

Members deliberated on their priorities for the next 18 months, which will shape their Work Plan, guiding their advice to the IAC. They identified 3 key areas with a focus on home and living:

1. Navigating the NDIS, including support for individuals in understanding NDIS systems and the role of local area coordinators (LACs) and support coordinators.
2. NDIS planning, involving the creation of participant-centred plans, capacity building through Circles of Support, transparent decision-making, and helping participants comprehend the planning process.
3. The connection between the NDIS and other systems, particularly concerning support for people with disabilities experiencing homelessness or housing shortages.

Members also recognised that biases among staff at the NDIA, providers, and the public create barriers for individuals with disabilities. They want to promote values of listening and inclusivity for people with disabilities within the NDIA, including co-design work with the independent living and plan flexibility [Reform for Outcomes initiatives](#).

Members agreed that the initial focus of their work will be navigating the NDIS and NDIS planning.

More information on the Reference Group

The Home and Living Reference Group's next meeting is scheduled for 9 November 2023. For additional details about Reference Group meetings and bulletins, visit [the IAC website](#). You can also access [IAC advice here](#).

An Easy Read version of the bulletin is also available, as part of the IAC's commitment to accessibility.