

Independent Advisory Council Meeting Bulletin 15 June 2022

This Bulletin summarises the recent meeting of the Independent Advisory Council (Council) to the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS). Leah Van Poppel, who is [Council's Principal Member \(external\)](#), chaired the meeting held on 15 June 2022.

From Council's Principal Member

The Principal Member acknowledged the appointment of The Honorable Bill Shorten MP as the Minister for the NDIS. The Principal Member will invite Mr Shorten to a future meeting on behalf of Council.

The Principal Member said this is Mr Martin Hoffman's last Council meeting as Chief Executive Officer of the National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA), highlighting his commitment to work alongside Council. She acknowledged his willingness to elevate the voice of Council in the NDIA, ongoing efforts to rebuild trust with the disability community, and openness to share information.

From NDIA Board & NDIA CEO

Ms Meredith Allan, Member of the NDIA Board and Risk Committee, noted positive visits to NDIS providers in and around Geelong.

Mr Hoffman thanked Council for their correspondence and well wishes in relation to his resignation. He congratulated Dr Lisa Studdert, Deputy CEO for Markets, Government and Engagement at the NDIA, who will step into the Acting Chief Executive role.

Mr Hoffman noted positive meetings with Minister Shorten about the planned review of the design, operation, and sustainability of the NDIS, as well as other priority work. He said Council may like to consider making a submission via the Board about Council's views on the review.

Mr Hoffman said the Disability Reform Ministers' Meeting will be held this week. He acknowledged the need for cooperative work with states and territories to balance mainstream disability supports. This includes, but is not limited to, the hospital systems, health and/or mental health, housing, and palliative care and how these systems work with the NDIS.

Mr Hoffman noted the NDIA's tender process, seeking community-based organisation to help deliver the NDIS partners in the community, recently closed. Work will now start on assessment to ensure new contracts are in place before June 2023.

Council Members' community reports

[Council Members \(external\)](#) and the [Expert Adviser \(external\)](#) reported on matters for the NDIA's attention, on behalf of people with disability in their communities, including:

- Positive sentiment in the community about the NDIA's commitment to co-design.
- Some NDIS participants with spinal disorders say the NDIS is life-changing and has given them greater flexibility and choice and control, compared with block funding models.
- The members would like the NDIA to consider using a person with disability as a spokesperson for the NDIS.
- One of Australia's largest discrete Aboriginal communities is often overlooked for supports because of their location.
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples need more community-led models of disability support and trusted relationships with therapists/health professionals.
- Members are hearing increased reports of a shortage of therapists and specialists who provide evidence about NDIS eligibility applications, particularly in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.
- Worker and staff shortages, with some people concerned about thin markets and consumer protection issues.
- Concerns as to whether the increases to the national minimum wage and Social, Community, Home care and Disability Services Industry (SCHADS) Award will affect prices of NDIS supports.
- Participants want to know when the NDIA will release 2022-23 NDIS pricing. The [pricing arrangements were released on 27 June \(external\)](#).
- Views that the quality and experience of support coordinators needs improvement through training and rigorous recruitment.
- Challenges with occupational therapists, including availability, charging participants for supports not received, and lack of NDIS training.
- Self-managers and self-managed participants need training or supports to maximise the value of their plans.
- The need for more education about ways people with disability can manage their funding and understand their rights.
- Some states do not have access to funded advocacy services to support people with NDIS-related issues. In states with advocacy services, there are often delays.
- Parents of young children with rare diseases who need specialist support are unable to access suitable childcare, causing employment and inclusion issues.
- There is a need to pilot new, innovative, and evidence-based models of therapy and supports to better support children's development in school.
- Views that the NDIA needs more market intervention projects, especially for children.
- There are reports the NDIA has sometimes removed supports for home and living immediately after a plan approval, or after a random S48 review.
- Some seeking supported independent living (SIL) as part of their plans or due to change of circumstance report on plan delays due to extra specialist information being required.
- The need for the NDIA and states and territories to work together on the shortage of social and community housing in regional areas.
- Reports some NDIS participants do not tell the NDIA about a change of circumstances or request a plan review because they fear they will lose their specialist disability accommodation (SDA) funding and/or face eviction.

- Reports about core funding reductions preventing some people from moving into SDA homes.
- Concerns raised regarding the quality of home and living decisions and processes in SDA putting NDIS participants, their co-residents, or support workers at risk and/or harm.
- Reports that some best-practice SDA providers face financial stress due to many factors, including issues NDIA decision making and service booking delays.
- Some NDIS participants and families do not know how to make a complaint about the services they get and/or in relation to the conduct of support coordinators.
- The importance of peer groups and support networks for people with intellectual disability.
- The view was raised that NDIS participants would like to see a draft plan summary after their planning meeting per recommendations in the 2019 [‘Review of the NDIS Act 2013 report’ \(Tune Review\)](#) (external) and that the Information Gathering for Access and Planning co-design project should consider draft plans in its work.
- Continued challenges between the NDIS and the justice system and/or justice liaison officers.
- Continued advocacy in Western Australia to ensure that an Australian Disability Enterprise (ADE) remains open so that people with disability are not left unemployed.
- State government regulated power markets and potential power shortages create anxiety among people who rely on life saving equipment and telecommunications.

Update on NDIA co-design work

Ms Van Poppel noted productive meetings held with Co-design Steering Committees recently. She said that six [co-design projects](#) (external) and activity schedules are underway and moving at different paces. Some of the co-design activities include:

- listening sessions with over 100 participants
- planning ways to test the co-design process
- an online survey to engage more with the community.

Disability Representative and Carer Organisations (DRCO) will soon lead their own listening sessions with under-represented communities.

Council Members noted the opportunity and value of self-assessments, and that any surveying being conducted should capture data on gender and diverse communities.

Update on NDIS Act implementation

NDIA Representatives talked about three key changes to the National Disability Scheme Act 2013 (NDIS Act) happening on 1 July. Members stated they would like to work with the NDIA on parts of the implementation, and noted:

- The NDIA should develop a communications plan to ensure information about changes to the Act are accurate and reach the right stakeholders.
- Unclear language used by the NDIA to communicate changes in the Act, may affect a planner’s or local area coordinator’s ability to communicate changes effectively.

Update on NDIA Corporate Plan

NDIA Representatives discussed the NDIA Corporate Plan 2022-26, which will be available before 30 August. Members noted the Corporate Plan should:

- have a strategic intent statement.
- look at government supports, like the disability support pension, that may impede employment and/or ways to make employment fair.
- think about how draft plan summaries may be a way to help people in remote and very remote areas.
- address the needs of the community and work force.
- address and clarify the many ways the NDIA interacts with the health system, and community health for children.

Update on Council Work Plan

Ms Van Poppel led discussions about Council's Work Plan for 2022-23, including priority areas of work for the upcoming year. Council Members will agree on the Work Plan from July 2022. Members gave feedback about potential new priority work areas and other matters, including:

- Linking the NDIA's co-design work into the Work Plan.
- Managing the time needed to complete Council priorities and Member workload.
- The need to reflect upon and understand progress against Council's past Formal Advice.
- The need to include work on home and living and inclusive communities in the Council Work Plan.
- Council should maintain important relationships with the NDIS Quality and Safeguards Commission and the Department of Social Services to further influence education and employment outcomes for participants.
- The need for Council to keep in touch with the progress and opportunities related to the Australian Disability Strategy's targeted action plan.

More information on Council

Council will next meet on 27 July 2022. Find out more about Council meetings and bulletins at the [Council's website \(external\)](#). You can also access advice from the [Council's website \(external\)](#).

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