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# Reference Group meeting bulletin 23 March 2023

## Equity and Inclusion Reference Group

This Bulletin summarises the recent meeting of the [Equity and Inclusion Reference Group](#) (Reference Group). The Reference Group gives advice to the Independent Advisory Council (Council) to the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) about diversity, inclusion, equal opportunity, and fairness in the NDIS.

The Reference Group met via video conference on 23 March 2023. [Leah van Poppel](#), Council Principal Member and Reference Group Co-chair, and [Adjunct Associate Professor Jennifer Cullen](#), Council Member and Reference Group Co-Chair, led the meeting.

In opening the meeting, Ms van Poppel noted that Council sent its advice 'Improving Equity in the NDIS' to the National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA) Board in early March 2023. In line with NDIS legislation, the Board forwards the advice along with an Agency Response to the [Disability Reform Ministerial Council](#).

Adjunct Associate Professor Cullen noted the work the Reference Group Members have done [since their last meeting](#).

## What Members have heard in their community

Reference Group Members reported on matters they have heard in their communities for Council's and the NDIA's attention, related to:

### NDIS access, service and supports

- Some people find it difficult to engage with the NDIA and other support systems. This is because staff are not adequately trained in trauma, cultural safety, and psychosocial disability.
- Ongoing issues with the quality of positive behaviour support practitioners and support plans. This includes a lack of cultural safety and receiving less core supports in plans where there is



more behaviour support. There are reports that some participants are not included in the development of these plans. Members also want to understand restrictive practice better.

- Some people with intellectual disability with supports for specialist disability accommodation and supported independent living say that homes, practices, and safeguards are not to standard.
- Reports that some people in shared living accommodation are experiencing restrictive practices. For example, some accommodation staff tell participants they will lose their NDIS funding if they do not attend their group programs.
- Calls for NDIA to better promote the use of psychosocial peer support programs, on top of allied health supports.
- Concern that some providers rush people who are 40 years and over into residential aged care.
- Guidelines and performance indicators are needed around school leaver employment supports to ensure a pathway for meaningful employment for people with disability. There is a need for innovative employment models.

## Other services and programs that give support

- There continues to be a lack of psychosocial support services for people not eligible for the NDIS. This includes a lack of affordable psychiatry services. Members wondered if the Information Linkages and Capacity Building program could help address this issue.
- Some people with disability still do not know how to contact the NDIS Quality and Safeguards Commission. Some do not have access to the technology needed to contact the Commission or find the process and response times confusing. Some do not understand their rights to complain.
- General impact around the lack of available housing for people with disability.

## Disability community

- Observations in some states, of inadequate community health supports. For example, drop-in centres, art programs, community programs.
- Important data in a recent [report summarising](#) two national surveys into 'Violence, abuse, neglect and exploitation of LGBTQA+ people with disability'. Particularly interest in data related to mental health.
- Many in my community feel that there are not enough people with disability employed at the NDIA, especially those with intellectual disability.

## Update on NDIA inclusion strategies

The Reference Group got an update on the NDIA's inclusion strategies.

Reference Group Members gave the following feedback about the First Nations Strategy:

- The importance of employing and involving people with lived experience in developing the First Nations Strategy including facilitation.



- Calls to understand the First Nations Advisory Council's membership.
- There is a need to support First Nations Advisory Council's members and those involved in the co-design the NDIA's new First Nations Strategy. This includes supporting any person with an intellectual disability, to access information and contribute to meetings.

Reference Group Members gave the following feedback about the Cultural and Linguistic Diverse (CALD) Strategy:

- People want to know about the diversity of the membership of the CALD Strategy's expert advisory group.

Reference Group Members gave the following feedback about the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Intersex, Queer, Asexual Plus (LGBTIQA+) Strategy:

- Reference Group Members acknowledged the NDIA's work to progress the LGBTIQA+ Strategy.
- There is an opportunity for the NDIA to be a leader in the LGBTIQA+ space. Including finding culturally safe solutions to current issues faced by LGBTIQA+ people, particularly transgender people.
- The NDIA should support LGBTIQA+, human rights and intersectional training for staff. This will lead to better support of participants in a culturally safe way. Providers also need to undertake training.

## Improving ways we develop Formal Advice for the NDIA Board

The Reference Group discussed ways Council can improve the development of its Formal Advice for the NDIA Board. The feedback will help improve future Formal Advice processes and reports. Members noted:

- General positive sentiment around the value of engaging and collaborating with leaders from First Nations, CALD and LGBTIQA+ and communities to inform the advice.
- The advice development was a true process of collaboration, and allowed for space to listen, learn and revise.
- Concern around the NDIA's effective implementation of Council's advice. Members wonder if the investment in the advice will bring about the desired changes in NDIA processes and better outcomes for participants.
- Members noted that the Agency is now providing regular progress reports on implementation of recent advice.

## More information on the Reference Group

The Reference Group will next meet on 22 June 2023. Find out more about Council Reference Group meetings and bulletins at [Council's website](#). You can also access [Council's advice here](#).

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