**Meeting of the COAG Disability Reform Council**

SYDNEY – 30 April 2018

**COMMUNIQUÉ**

The Council of Australian Governments (COAG) Disability Reform Council (the Council) held its first meeting of 2018 today in Sydney. Discussions focussed on addressing a number of key issues as all Commonwealth, State and Territory governments move towards full scheme operations of the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS).

The Council noted as at 31 December 2017 there were 132,743 participants in the NDIS with a plan. This is over a third of the total estimated number of NDIS participants. In addition, a further 9,523 children have been supported in the Early Childhood Early Intervention gateway. There are also 12,328 providers registered to provide supports to NDIS participants, which represents a 17 per cent increase in the number of registered service providers since the previous quarter. More than $12.5 billion has been committed to participant supports since the scheme commenced on 1 July 2013.

The Council welcomed the Chairman of the National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA) Board, Dr Helen Nugent AO and Mr Robert De Luca, Chief Executive Officer, to discuss the progress on NDIS transition implementation and outcomes from the NDIA’s participant and provider pathways review. The Council reiterated its support of the initiatives to improve the experience of participants and providers, and again committed to supporting the NDIA in the design and implementation of the new pathways.

The Council also noted the outcomes provided in the NDIS Independent Pricing review released on 2 March 2018, and the NDIA Board’s in-principle support and response to the Report’s 25 recommendations. In relation to pricing, the Council noted feedback Ministers had received from the disability sector for further work in relation to different cohorts. The Council agreed to progress this work through Senior Officials with a report back to its next meeting.

Since the Council last met, work has progressed to refine policies that support national consistency in the NDIS, including improvements to the interfaces between the NDIS and other services, establishing key performance indicators and metrics to define market effectiveness and an update on progress made to date on developing a potential model for school transport in the Scheme.

The Council is continuing to work with the NDIA to transition from state-based to national service delivery arrangements. The Council agreed to a program of work, including establishing a process for coordinating the escalation of critical cases and ensuring effective coordination of mainstream services within the NDIS and the development of an implementation plan for this body of work. The Council agreed the NDIA would report on this and broader market issues at its next meeting.

In advance of a nationally agreed approach, the Commonwealth, NDIA and jurisdictions have established working groups for the priority interface areas of health, mental health, justice and child protection. Working groups have explored complex case studies highlighting the outcomes for NDIS participants as a result of challenges navigating the various service systems. Outcomes from this work will be prioritised and presented to the Council at its next meeting to give certainty to participants, families and the market.

At the last Council meeting it was agreed that a review into the Specialist Disability Accommodation Pricing and Payments Framework would be undertaken in its third year of operation (1 July 2018 to
30 June 2019). The Council agreed to consider the outcomes of the Review at a future meeting in late‑2018, ensuring the principles of the Scheme are maintained, such as choice and control, and demand of eligible participants is met.

On 20 November 2017, the Council agreed to commence work on disability reform post-2020 and the development of a new national disability framework. This includes bringing forward the formal evaluation of the Strategy from 2021 to 2018 to strategically review the current strategy and make recommendations for a new framework. The Council agreed to the proposed approach, milestones and timeframes for developing a new national disability framework and supporting action plan for beyond-2020.

The National Institute of Labour Studies (NILS) Evaluation of the NDIS was commissioned by the Commonwealth under the Intergovernmental Agreement for the NDIS Launch to provide external validation of participant experiences and outcomes. Following its consideration at today’s meeting, the Council noted the Final Evaluation Report will be released by the Commonwealth following the meeting, and agreed to continue to work to ensure the needs of older people with disability, people with psychosocial disability, intellectual disability and complex needs, or who are from Culturally and Linguistically Diverse or Indigenous backgrounds are met..

The Council discussed the Commonwealth’s updated proposed full scheme arrangements which form the basis for negotiating the new Intergovernmental Agreements for full scheme NDIS. The Council agreed to provide COAG with advice on the progress to date on full scheme arrangements, noting such agreements would be negotiated in more detail on a bilateral basis.

The Council welcomed the appointment of the Quality and Safeguards Commissioner Designate, Mr Graeme Head. Discussions focused on the considerable progress made in implementing the Quality and Safeguards Commission (the Commission) ahead of reaching full scheme in New South Wales and South Australia from 1 July 2018. The Council and its committees continue to progress work supporting the establishment of the Commission.