

MEETING OF THE COAG DISABILITY REFORM COUNCIL

GOLD COAST – 28 JUNE 2019

COMMUNIQUÉ

The Council of Australian Governments (COAG) Disability Reform Council (the Council) held its first formal meeting for 2019 today at the Gold Coast, Queensland. The Council welcomed the incoming Commonwealth Minister for the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) and Minister for Government Services, the Hon Stuart Robert MP as Chairperson of the Council.

The Council reiterated its continued commitment and shared responsibility to deliver on the NDIS' objectives with action, and quick resolution of emerging challenges so the NDIS meets the needs of Australians with disability, as well as their families and carers.

Ministers agreed to maintain a strong focus on improving the operation, transparency and governance of the NDIS, and to this end will reconvene in September 2019 to seek to resolve critical issues.

The Council resolved a number of long-standing issues, including the interaction of the NDIS with the health system and how the NDIS will support families with children who are unable to live in the family home because of their complex disability support needs. The Council stood by the Commonwealth's commitment to move as fast as possible to make sure that people with disability receive the services they need and do not fall through the gaps as the NDIS transitions to maturity.

Building on arrangements agreed in December 2018, the Council agreed to a range of disability-related health supports that will be provided through the NDIS and circulate a fact sheet as part of this Communique (Attachment A) on how the NDIS and health services will work together. The Council agreed that further work on implementation, to be led by the National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA), would include representatives from the Commonwealth, states and territories (including health officials), the NDIS Quality and Safeguards Commission and appropriate external expertise.

The approach agreed by the Council to fund disability related health supports under the NDIS recognises participants need to be placed at the centre of all decisions. It will provide certainty to NDIS participants and allow for clearer delineation of system responsibilities.

The Council agreed the Hospital Discharge Delay Action Plan that will address NDIS related issues to promote timely discharge of NDIS participants from public hospitals, that Commonwealth and State and Territory agencies will work together to ensure the actions are implemented to the timescale. The Council acknowledged work undertaken in consultation with the Australian Health Ministers Advisory Council (AHMAC) and that AHMAC will update COAG Health Council on progress against the action plan.

The Council agreed to work together to improve the service experience of families with children who are unable to live at home because of their complex disability needs, and for child-focused arrangements to be in place in all states and territories by 31 August 2019. All governments committed to collaborating to act in the best interests of children and their families, to provide stable and supported arrangements for children living outside the family home, and effective early intervention support for families so that children are encouraged to live at home where possible.

The Council agreed it would receive regular reports on implementation of the matters agreed in relation to disability-related health supports, hospital discharge, including the pilot underway in South Australia, and for children who are unable to live in the family home.

The Council noted the role of the NDIA in guiding market stewardship. Ministers welcomed the NDIA's commitment to publish its full price-setting methodology to the market and to share market data. The Council welcomed the release of NDIS 2019-20 price guide, which will commence on 1 July 2019, incorporating outcomes from the Therapy Review and recommendations from the Western Australia Market Review.

The Council agreed that securing a high performing NDIS over the long-term is vital for participants, communities and that all Governments will work with the NDIA to achieve that goal.

The Council has committed to ensuring the financial sustainability of the Scheme; continued oversight of market development and transparent pricing to ensure service availability for participants; and improved focus on operational performance and greater transparency over Scheme costs. These issues will be considered further at the next meeting of the Council.

The Council noted the progress towards implementing the new national quality and safeguarding arrangements and how the NDIS Quality and Safeguards Commission is working with stakeholders to support implementation. The Council noted the Commissioner is continuing to work with stakeholders to identify and respond to any emerging issues with implementing the framework, including impacts on small business and providers.

The Council discussed the progress and next steps to inform the proposed establishment of an NDIS Reserve Fund, to ensure funding committed for NDIS participants is invested in NDIS participants. The Council noted that policy and design parameters for the proposed Reserve Fund will be developed in consultation with jurisdictions and that a formal proposal would be prepared for consideration later in 2019.

Minister Robert affirmed the Commonwealth's election commitment to legislate a NDIS Participant Service Guarantee. This guarantee will set shorter timeframes for people with disability to get an NDIS plan and to have their plan reviewed. Children and participants requiring specialist disability accommodation (SDA) and assistive technology by 1 July 2020 will be prioritised. The guarantee will be informed by a review of the *National Disability Insurance Scheme Act 2013* (the Act Review). The Act Review will be undertaken during the second half of 2019 in consultation with people with disability, their families, supporters and state and territory governments. The Act Review will focus on removing legislative impediments to NDIS processes and removing red tape for participants and providers.