

MEETING OF THE COAG DISABILITY REFORM COUNCIL

SYDNEY – 9 OCTOBER 2019

COMMUNIQUÉ

The Council of Australian Governments (COAG) Disability Reform Council (the Council) met today for its second meeting for 2019 in Sydney, New South Wales.

Building on discussions at its 28 June 2019 meeting, the Council maintained momentum in resolving long-standing issues regarding the interface between the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) and mainstream service systems.

The Council agreed to an approach to improve the access and experience for participants with psychosocial disability in the NDIS and to address interface issues between the NDIS and mainstream mental health systems. The Council's discussions underscored the importance of improving access to the NDIS for people with psychosocial disability through a range of strategies, and the need for effective interaction between the NDIS and the clinical mental health system through a coordinated approach to care, information sharing and concurrent supports, which are critical to optimising outcomes for people requiring both mental health treatment and psychosocial disability support. The Council welcomed the establishment of a Psychosocial Disability Recovery Framework, with a strong focus on recovery and supporting episodic needs, noting that this would be developed in consultation with states and territories.

The Council agreed the National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA) will introduce Justice Liaison Officers (JLOs) in each state and territory to work across their justice systems. The JLOs will provide a single point of contact for workers within each state and territory justice system, providing a coordinated approach to supporting NDIS participants in youth and adult justice systems. The Council also agreed that targeted resources and training will be developed and implemented to improve the coordination of supports for NDIS participants interacting with the justice system.

The Council endorsed an approach to improve the provision of transport supports under the NDIS. This includes interim measures to increase transport funding for NDIS participants who are significant users of taxi subsidy schemes, and the full reimbursement of states and territories for the continuation of their schemes for NDIS participants until longer-term transport support policy and funding is resolved.

The Council noted more than 300,000 people with disability have joined the NDIS and acknowledged the work being undertaken by the NDIA to improve operational performance of the NDIS. This includes through the establishment of supported pathways for participants with complex needs; improving participant access and eligibility through the Community Connectors Program; and the establishment of a framework to provide clarity for NDIS providers and participants on the provision of respite.

The Council noted the importance of an integrated and holistic framework for maintaining critical supports for participants. The Council requested implementation be expedited and that further refinement and consultation be undertaken, including when responding to critical incidents, by the NDIA with states and territories and reflect participant experience.

The Council agreed to work collaboratively on the implementation of the Information, Linkages and Capacity Building Strategy and grant programs to review the allocation of funding to date, monitor risks and implement mitigation strategies, including short-term bridging funding where available, and ensure greater local knowledge in design and implementation. The Council agreed to monitor the

roll-out of the 2015 Information, Linkages and Capacity Building Framework and consider it at its next meeting. Current 2019-20 ILC grant processes will continue.

The Council welcomed greater transparency and engagement regarding NDIS price setting, including the public release of the NDIS pricing strategy and NDIS Efficient Cost Model for Disability Support Workers by the NDIA immediately following today's meeting.

To further develop the market for Specialist Disability Accommodation (SDA), the Council also agreed to consider amendments to the SDA Pricing and Payments Framework and SDA Rules to bring the rules into line with regulatory best practice, provide clarity of key SDA policy settings and allow SDA participants to have greater flexibility in their choice of living arrangements.

The Council noted the end of the 2018-19 financial year marked the first full year of operation for the NDIS Quality and Safeguards Commission in the first two jurisdictions to come within its remit, New South Wales and South Australia. The NDIS Commission is now operating in seven of eight jurisdictions with the support of 223 staff across Australia. The Council acknowledged the work of the Commission in supporting NDIS providers to transition to national arrangements for behavioural support.

The Council noted the significant progress that has been made by the NDIA, Commonwealth, and state and territory officials working collaboratively to implement the Council's decisions from June 2019. The Council discussed the need for greater collaboration to drive delivery and the Council noted that it will continue to monitor the progressive implementation of funding for disability related health supports for NDIS participants from 1 October 2019, ongoing implementation of the National Hospital Discharge Action Plan, and the finalisation of Memorandums of Understanding to better deliver services for children in voluntary out of home care.

As the NDIS moves from the transition phase to full maturity, the Council acknowledged the need for setting the NDIS up for long-term success. The Council discussed the importance of improving long-term outcomes for NDIS participants, including through the greater use of data and research. The Council acknowledged the recent release of data by the NDIA and supported the recent decision of the Australian Data and Digital Council (ADDC) to establish an enduring, longitudinal National Disability Data Asset—agreeing to participate in its development—with an agreed timetable developed for participating jurisdictions to contribute data to the asset.

The Council also agreed to ongoing discussions to ensure, and report on, the long-term financial sustainability of the NDIS, and agreed a proposal will be considered at its next meeting.

The Council also agreed actuarial advice on a Reserve Fund will be provided to states and territories by the end of October 2019. The development and design of an NDIS Reserve Fund will be accelerated for consideration by the Council when it next meets.

To continue its focus on resolving issues and delivering outcomes for people living with disability, the Council agreed to meet again before the end of 2019.