

DISABILITY REFORM MINISTERS' MEETING (DRMM)
Videoconference – 15 October 2021

COMMUNIQUÉ

Commonwealth, state and territory Disability Ministers met on 15 October 2021. Ministers noted apologies from the Victorian Minister for Disability, Ageing and Carers, the Hon James Merlino MP, and the Tasmanian Minister for Disability Services, the Hon Sarah Courtney MP.

Ministers noted *Australia's Disability Strategy 2021-2031* has been endorsed by Disability Ministers and the Commonwealth and is with First Ministers and the Australian Local Government Association for final endorsement. Ministers indicated a shared commitment to launch the Strategy on International Day of People with Disability, 3 December 2021.

Ministers acknowledged the significant progress by all governments to accelerate COVID-19 vaccination rates for people with disability and disability workers and noted intensive work to ensure those yet to be vaccinated have opportunities to do so as soon as possible. Ministers agreed that officials should continue to work with the disability sector to plan and coordinate relevant health and disability supports as Australia transitions its COVID-19 response.

Ministers received a report and briefing on the outcomes of consultations on the *National Disability Insurance Scheme Amendments (Participant Service Guarantee and Other Measures) Bill 2021*. Around 860 people participated in the consultation process, with more than 550 people involved in the forums and more than 300 written submissions received. The NDIA's Independent Advisory Council also provided feedback on the proposed legislation.

Ministers noted the broad support for the proposed legislation during public consultations, particularly for the introduction of the Participant Service Guarantee. Ministers were briefed on small but important changes that will be made to the Bill and Rules to address feedback and ensure the primary objective of improving the participant experience is achieved. Ministers noted Minister Reynolds' commitment to provide the revised Bill for consideration ahead of introduction into Parliament, with opportunity to make submissions to the Senate Community Affairs Legislation Committee inquiry process.

Ministers noted the NDIA Board's release of the Scheme Actuary's 2020-21 Annual Financial Sustainability Report on 8 October 2021, and noted ongoing joint work to analyse the actuarial forecast model and cost drivers in the Scheme, which includes close engagement with representatives of people with disability. Ministers will consider a report on these issues at their next meeting in December 2021.

Ministers discussed impacts of regulation on the NDIS provider market and requested that officials meet to consider these issues in more detail prior to the next meeting of Ministers in December. Ministers noted related work underway including the NDIS Annual Pricing Review, further planned improvements to Supported Independent Living arrangements, and work to align regulation to improve quality and safety of services and supports and reduce red tape across the care and support sectors, including disability, aged care and veterans care. A review of the NDIS Quality and Safeguarding Framework is also expected to commence later this year, following conclusion of consultation with Ministers on the scope.

Ministers received an update on the NDIS National Workforce Plan 2021-25, including the positive response to the "[A Life Changing Life](#)" campaign launched on 15 August 2021, which encourages Australians to consider work in the care and support sector.

Ministers discussed ongoing work in thin markets and the need to explore flexible approaches that ensure choice and control and access to appropriate supports, particularly in remote communities. Ministers will consider these issues further at their December meeting.