

COAG Disability Reform Council
13 November 2015
Communiqué

The Council of Australian Governments (COAG) Disability Reform Council (the Council) met today in Melbourne. The meeting was chaired by the Hon Christian Porter MP, the Commonwealth Minister for Social Services with responsibility for disability policy and the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS). The Council welcomed Minister Porter as the new Chair of the Council and acknowledged the significant contribution of Senator the Hon Mitch Fifield as former Chair.

Transition to full scheme

The Council noted governments are working together, with the National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA), to deliver the full roll-out of the NDIS.

The Commonwealth and States and Territories are committed to finalising bilateral agreements as soon possible to support the transition from 30,000 participants in trial sites to the full roll-out of the NDIS for an estimated 460,000 eligible people.

On 16 September 2015 the Commonwealth signed bilateral agreements for the transition to full scheme with New South Wales by July 2018 and Victoria by July 2019. These are significant milestones which will support arrangements to facilitate the transition to the NDIS for over half the eligible population of the full scheme nationally.

The Commonwealth and remaining jurisdictions are working collaboratively on detailed schedules of how to achieve transition to the NDIS and with a view to ensuring those transitions are as timely as possible, including consideration of the mix of people already receiving support from government services, and people who do not currently receive supports.

On 25 September 2015 the Commonwealth and Queensland announced an early transition of the NDIS in Townsville and Charters Towers for children and young people and all eligible participants on Palm Island, up to a total of 1,600 participants. Pre-planning activities will commence in January 2016. This announcement is consistent with the agreement at the COAG meeting in April 2015. The Northern Territory has commenced discussions with the Commonwealth on a proposal for an additional trial site.

In the Australian Capital Territory, all eligible participants are expected to transition to the NDIS by July 2016.

Western Australia has commenced discussions regarding its transition to full scheme.

The Board of the NDIA

The Council noted a proposal to reappoint the Chair and three of the current Board members for a period of six months from 1 July 2016 to 30 December 2016 and further noted a proposal to reappoint the remaining four current Board members for a period of twelve months from 1 July 2016 to 30 June 2017.

Specialist Disability Accommodation

Ministers endorsed a pricing framework to guide the approach to specialist disability accommodation in the NDIS for participants who are assessed as requiring specialist disability accommodation. The framework outlines how benchmark prices for specialist disability accommodation will be developed by the NDIA, and provides guidance on for whom and under which circumstances specialist disability accommodation will be provided.

Ministers agreed that the NDIA will develop benchmark prices by early 2016.

Ministers agreed to consider broader disability housing issues associated with the roll-out of the NDIS, in conjunction with State and Commonwealth Ministers responsible for housing, as soon as practicable in 2016.

Quality and Safeguards

Ministers agreed to the broad directions of an NDIS quality and safeguarding framework and to publish a report on the outcomes of the public and stakeholder consultations process which occurred in early 2015 (report available at dss.gov.au). The framework will reflect the shared commitment to the NDIS.

The design of the new nationally consistent quality and safeguarding system will be considered by the Council in early 2016. State, Territory and Commonwealth quality assurance arrangements will apply during transition.

Decisions Taken Out-Of-Session 2015

Ministers noted decisions taken out-of-session.

Housing Pilots

Ministers noted the progress of housing pilots in NDIS trial sites and noted the key next steps would be to proceed with housing pilots in the Barwon trial site in November 2015, with future pilots considered at a later date. Ministers noted that NSW had issued an expression of interest for specialist disability accommodation in the Hunter.

Rural and Remote Service Delivery

Ministers endorsed a strategy outlining the NDIA's approach to rural and remote service delivery and agreed it be provided to COAG. Ministers noted the strategy was developed on the basis of NDIA trial experience to date in rural and remote area, particularly in South Australia, Tasmania and the Northern Territory, together with the experience and lessons learned from existing rural and remote service delivery approaches across Australia. The strategy provides an important starting point in developing a targeted approach to the implementation of the NDIS in rural and remote communities across Australia.

The Council agreed to request COAG endorsement of a separate NDIA Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Engagement Plan which is to be developed for consideration by the Council and COAG in 2016.

Carers and the NDIS

Ministers reconfirmed the significant role that carers play in supporting people with disability, including NDIS participants, and agreed that the role and inclusion of carers in the NDIS should be promoted. They requested that the NDIA reviews its policies and other resources to ensure appropriate inclusion of carers in all aspects of the NDIS.

National Disability Strategy (NDS) Second Implementation Plan

The Council noted a progress report to be provided to COAG on the development of the second high-level implementation plan of the NDS. Ministers noted particular focus over the second implementation period (2015-2018) will be given to improving employment outcomes for people with disability and outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people with disability.