

COAG Disability Reform Council

20 November 2017

Statement

The Council of Australian Governments (COAG) Disability Reform Council (the Council) met today, noting that the Queensland Government is currently in caretaker, and discussed a number of key issues as governments move towards full scheme operations of the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS).

The Council noted that as at 30 September 2017 there were 112,785 participants in the NDIS with a plan, including 45,432 people who had not previously been using specialist disability services. This is over a third of the total estimated number of NDIS participants. In addition, a total of 6,716 children are also receiving support through the Early Childhood Early Intervention gateway. There are also 10,507 providers registered to provide supports to NDIS participants; 41% of these are individuals or sole traders. More than \$9.5 billion has been committed to participant supports since the scheme commenced on 1 July 2013.

Since the Council last met, the Productivity Commission (PC) has released the outcomes of its review into NDIS costs. The Council considered the report in light of the shared responsibilities governments have for the NDIS. The Council welcomed the PC findings that:

- NDIS costs are on track;
- the NDIS is already providing life-changing assistance to people with disability; and
- there is an extraordinary level of commitment to the success and sustainability of the NDIS across all levels of government, participants, families and carers, providers and the community.

Whilst the Council acknowledges that the number of participants entering the NDIS remains lower than originally estimated, the Council noted that this experience has been absolutely consistent during the NDIS trials and since the commencement of transition to full scheme on 1 July 2016.

The Council reaffirmed its commitment to the current rollout timetable. The NDIS will be available to all eligible participants at the time scheduled in the bilateral agreements between the Commonwealth, States and Territories. This rollout schedule is on track and by July 2018 the NDIS will be available to all eligible people across New South Wales and South Australia, and in all other states and territories (with the exception of WA) by July 2019.

The Council noted the PC's wide-ranging recommendations on the challenges of fully implementing the NDIS, including the tension between rollout speed and the quality of participant and provider experiences, cost pressures and recommendations for providing funding certainty, the need for mainstream services to support people with disability and the challenges of market and workforce development.

The Council agreed to work with the NDIA to consider and respond to all of the PC recommendations, and will provide advice to COAG on future governance and funding arrangements for the NDIS at full scheme.

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 was supportive of the initiatives to improve the experience of participants and providers, and committed to support the NDIA in the design and implementation of the new pathways.

These improvements will address a number of the PC findings relating to the quality of the planning process.

The Council is continuing to work with the NDIA in a number of areas, to transition from State-based to national delivery arrangements. The Council agreed to a program of work, including consultation with participants, families, providers and stakeholders on a potential national model for specialist school transport under the NDIS. The Council also noted progress on the implementation of Specialist Disability Accommodation (SDA), including that as at 31 August 2017, 5,331 participants had SDA included in their plans and 403 SDA dwellings were registered for SDA.

The Council requested the NDIA Board to provide further information to the market and to consider mechanisms to further encourage SDA investment and agreed to develop Terms of Reference for the 2018-19 review of the SDA Framework.

The Council acknowledged the importance of maintaining critical supports and requested the NDIA to continue to prioritise this work and report to the next meeting of the Council.

The Council discussed the considerable progress made in implementing the Quality and Safeguards Framework since the Council agreed the Framework in December 2016, and recognises the urgent need to pass the NDIS Amendment (Quality and Safeguards Commission and Other Measures) Bill 2017 through the Commonwealth Parliament to establish the NDIS Quality and Safeguards Commission from 1 July 2018. To support the Quality and Safeguards Commission, the Council continues to progress work on establishing national worker screening practices.

The Council noted an update on progress of the National Disability Carers Advisory Council against its objectives for 2017, and agreed to further activities to reinvigorate the National Disability Strategy, including resolving NDIS mainstream interface issues. The Council also agreed to commence work now to prepare for a new disability reform framework beyond 2020.