

DISABILITY REFORM MINISTERIAL COUNCIL (DRMC)

Melbourne

COMMUNIQUÉ

Commonwealth, State and Territory Disability Ministers met on 3 November 2023 in Melbourne.

Co-Chairs of the NDIS Review Panel Professor Bruce Bonyhady AM and Ms Lisa Paul AO PSM presented the independent Report to disability ministers and discussed the Review's recommendations. The Panel also included Mr Kevin Cocks AM, Ms Judy Brewer AO, Dr Stephen P King, Mr Dougie Herd and Ms Kirsten Deane OAM.

The objectives of the Review were to ensure participants have a better experience and more control, by making the NDIS more about people and less about bureaucracy through greater equity, transparency and consistency. Further, it seeks to raise a set of improvements designed to protect participants from exploitation and ensure better quality of outcomes.

The Review of the Scheme is ensuring that the NDIS operates in the best interest of the participant. It is about ensuring that every dollar in the Scheme gets to the people for whom the NDIS was designed.

Ministers heard the Review had engaged deeply with people with disabilities and their supporters, including those who are not usually reached. This included 4,000 submissions and thousands of hours engaging with people with disability and their representatives, as part of the process to produce the final report.

Ministers committed that those directly impacted by key decisions about the Scheme will continue to play a key role in developing the detail and in implementing the reforms.

The NDIS is too important not to get right. Ministers are committed to ensure the steps taken to make the Scheme better are the right ones.

We can only do that through continuing to work closely with, and listening to, people with disability, their families and carers and the disability community.

Reforms must be guided by good plans for implementation and good legislation – developed in partnership with people with disability and the disability community.

Ministers heard that a person-centred, fairer NDIS, embedded in a balanced ecosystem of support that is easy to navigate and delivers high quality supports, will contribute to a sustainable scheme, aiming to achieve National Cabinet's target growth rate of 8 per cent by 2026-27. Without timely action to improve outcomes for people with disability, the NDIS is projected to grow to more than 1 million participants and cost up to \$100 billion a year by 2032.

DISABILITY REFORM MINISTERIAL COUNCIL (DRMC)

Melbourne

COMMUNIQUÉ

Ministers discussed key challenges currently facing the NDIS that have been identified by the Review's 'What we have heard' report released in June, including:

- Participant numbers and NDIS costs are higher and growing at a faster rate than projected by the Productivity Commission in 2017.
- Further detailed design and implementation of any changes to the NDIS needs to continue with the engagement and trust created through deep engagement of the Independent Review.
- The NDIS exists in an ecosystem of disability support that must be unified.
- The NDIS participant pathway has unclear criteria for reasonable and necessary supports which create complexity, stress, inconsistency and mistrust.
- Ineffective market stewardship and regulation has led to service gaps, poor quality supports and opened the door to exploitation.
- Participants have limited choice over where, how and with whom they live, and NDIS Supported Independent Living decisions are inconsistent.
- Complexity of local area coordinators (LACs), support coordination, plan management and community connectors is an expensive barrier to participants accessing supports.

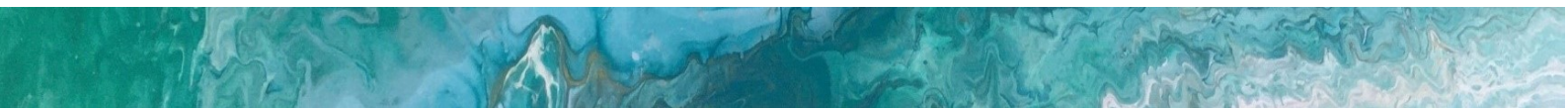
Ministers thanked the Panel for its comprehensive work, and noted that the final report includes recommendations for consideration by all governments and National Cabinet. Ministers noted they would receive supplementary technical information later in November, ahead of National Cabinet. It is intended that the review will be released publicly after the next National Cabinet.

Ministers discussed the Report of the Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People with Disability, and agreed in-principle the allocation of recommendations across the Commonwealth and states and territories, as follows:

- Joint Commonwealth, states and territories: 85 recommendations.
- Commonwealth: 84 recommendations.
- States and territories: 50 recommendations.
- Joint non-government and Commonwealth: 3 recommendations.

Ministers committed to work collaboratively to progress the necessary reform to make Australia safe and inclusive for all people with disability and noted the significant work of the Royal Commission, and the contribution of people with disability, their families and carers over four-and-a-half years.

The Commonwealth provided an update on the establishment of its Taskforce to work through the recommendations.



DISABILITY REFORM MINISTERIAL COUNCIL (DRMC)

Melbourne

COMMUNIQUÉ

Ministers noted that addressing the issues highlighted by the Disability Royal Commission requires a national effort, including all governments and all parts of our community. Ministers acknowledged that there are a range of recommendations in the NDIS Review that intersect with those of the Disability Royal Commission, which will need to be carefully considered in parallel.

Ministers endorsed the first Implementation Report of Australia's Disability Strategy 2021-2031, which highlights the progress being made under the Strategy to improve outcomes for all people with disability.

Ministers also endorsed the membership of the new National Disability Data Asset Council (NDDA Council) which will progress initiatives to Ministers early in 2024.

Ministers endorsed the Supported Employment Plan, which enacts the guiding principles for supported employment agreed earlier this year. The Plan will guide the transition of the supported employment sector and expand opportunities for meaningful employment of people with disability.

Ministers agreed the Plan will be updated in 2024, to reflect any additional actions being taken in response to the Disability Royal Commission and the NDIS Review.

Ministers will meet again in December in Sydney.

