

MEETING OF THE COAG DISABILITY REFORM COUNCIL

SYDNEY – 10 DECEMBER 2018

COMMUNIQUÉ

The Council of Australian Governments (COAG) Disability Reform Council (the Council) met today in Sydney. Discussions focussed on ensuring the successful rollout of the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS).

The Council welcomed the Chairman of the National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA) Board and the Chief Executive Officer who provided an update on the implementation of the NDIS.

The Council noted that as at 30 September 2018, there were 202,137 participants with a plan in the NDIS, while a further 6,656 children had been supported in the Early Childhood Early Intervention gateway. Almost one in three Australians in the NDIS are receiving disability supports for the first time. Importantly, the latest quarterly data shows 93 per cent of participants now rate their experience as 'Very Good' or 'Good' – its highest level since the trial phase – and improvements to outcomes as participants spend more time in the NDIS:

- a. For child participants not yet at school, 91 per cent of parents and carers thought the NDIS has helped increase their child's ability to communicate what they want, compared to 87 per cent in their first year.
- b. For school-age children 14 and under, 69 per cent of parents and carers felt their child has become more independent in their second year of participation, compared to 54 per cent in their first year.
- c. Sixty-three per cent of participants aged 15-24 say the NDIS had helped them with daily living activities in their second year of participation, compared to 61 per cent in their first year.
- d. Three-quarters of participants aged 25 years and over say the NDIS had helped them to exercise more choice and control over their lives during their second year of participation, compared to 71 per cent in their first year.

The Council noted that since the previous update from the NDIA in April 2018 significant progress had been made to improve the experience of participants and providers, including:

- a. The commencement of implementation of the new NDIS participant pathway, a new complex support needs pathway, a revised early childhood early intervention pathway, and two pathway service streams for people with psychosocial and hearing disability.
- b. The release of three new participant booklets and a new easy to read plan template.
- c. Further improvements to the participant and provider portals, improved supported independent living (SIL) pack and SIL quoting tool, implementation of a range of new pricing arrangements from 1 July 2018 and the announcement of updated pricing and guidance for complex participants.
- d. The release of the NDIA's Market Enablement Framework and establishing systems for maintaining critical supports.
- e. The establishment of a NDIS Fraud Taskforce.

Since the Council met in April 2018, work has progressed to improve the experience and interactions of NDIS participants with mainstream service systems of health, mental health, child protection, justice, personal care in schools and specialist school transport.

The Council noted the importance of greater clarity in roles and responsibilities between the NDIS and mainstream health systems. The Council agreed positions and actions to support clarity and consistency on access to the NDIS for people with underlying conditions, NDIS supports for self-care and participants who are also receiving palliative care in the community, the application of NDIS requirements to consider value for money and the application of NDIS legislative requirements in relation to informal supports. To support NDIS participants who require services where further work is required on roles and responsibilities, the Council agreed to interim, without prejudice, arrangements for supports required due to permanent functional impairment that would usually be delivered by clinicians outside hospital settings pending further advice on enduring roles and responsibilities. The Council noted that states and territories, the Commonwealth and the NDIA are undertaking further work to clarify roles and responsibilities for the NDIS and health systems where health and disability supports are required concurrently (including supports in hospital settings and the transition from rehabilitation to NDIS maintenance supports).

The Council agreed a way forward to develop national models for the delivery of specialist school transport and personal care in schools in the NDIS that provide certainty for families and clarity for providers, while maintaining choice and control for NDIS participants. States and territories will continue to deliver services for specialist school transport and personal care in schools until 31 December 2023, while development work is undertaken.

The Council has committed to involving participants, parents, providers and schools in this development work to identify how specialist school transport can be provided to students with disability either within the NDIS or alongside the scheme. Disability ministers noted the importance of incorporating the expertise of the existing sector in the work ahead.

The Council noted the work to date to support children with complex and high level disability support needs to live at home or in alternate accommodation and agreed to further work to enhance how the NDIS and state and territory and universal support services are working in unison to support children with disability and their families.

The Council acknowledged the considerable efforts of states and territories in working with the Commonwealth to develop the detailed policy for nationally consistent NDIS worker screening underpinning the Intergovernmental Agreement on Nationally Consistent Worker Screening for the NDIS (the IGA). The Council agreed to additional schedules to the IGA, which outline national arrangements for the risk assessment and decision-making framework for an NDIS worker screening check and the NDIS Worker Screening Check application form and process. The Council agreed to work bilaterally on the details of the funding for the national worker screening database.

The Council agreed all jurisdictions will continue to work towards national consistency in areas where jurisdictions vary in their implementation of the national policy, and for an update to be provided to the Council at its first meeting of 2019.

Further to the Council's agreement at the April 2018 meeting, the Council welcomed the final report on the review of the Specialist Disability Accommodation Pricing and Payments Framework. The Council acknowledged that the work represents a big step forward in giving confidence to investors. The Council agreed that all jurisdictions would consider all recommendations and respond by mid-January 2019. This focuses on proposed changes to the Framework and Rules to stimulate investment, improve access and remove barriers to eligible NDIS participants accessing specialist disability accommodation.

The Council noted the number of providers registered to provide supports to NDIS participants rose to 17,923 as at 30 September 2018 and agreed a revised NDIS Market Key Performance Indicator Framework, which will provide information on the performance of the NDIS market and provide signals for where intervention may be required. The Council also agreed to look at employment outcomes generated by the NDIS. The Council also agreed a way forward to provide clarity in the roles and responsibilities of jurisdictions in the management of the NDIS Market.

The Council noted that it would next meet in the first half of 2019.