

DISABILITY REFORM MINISTERS' MEETING (DRMM)

Microsoft Teams – 10 December 2021

COMMUNIQUÉ

Commonwealth, state and territory Disability Ministers met on 10 December 2021.

Ministers welcomed the new Victorian Minister for Disability, Ageing and Carers, the Hon Anthony Carbines MP.

Ministers noted apologies from the WA Minister for Disability Services; the Hon Don Punch MP, the Tasmanian Minister for Disability Services; the Hon Sarah Courtney MP, and the NT Minister for Disabilities; and the Hon Kate Worden MLA.

Ministers reflected that despite the challenges of 2021, a number of key items progressed under the Disability Ministers' reform agenda, including:

- Endorsement and launch of Australia's Disability Strategy and the Targeted Action Plans on the International Day of People with Disability
- Launch of the NDIS National Workforce Plan 2021-25
- Introduction in the Australian parliament of a Bill to amend legislation to implement the Participant Service Guarantee, to give participants, families and carers greater certainty about how long NDIS processes will take
- Co-design with people with disability proposed to be enshrined in the principles of the NDIS Act
- Joint efforts to support vaccination of people with disability against COVID-19.
- Undertaking work to gain a shared understanding of higher than expected scheme growth.

Ministers discussed priorities for 2022 with finalisation to occur out of session prior to the next meeting in February 2022.

Ministers noted the independent review by actuarial firm Taylor Fry on the actuarial forecast model and drivers of Scheme cost, and agreed to undertake qualitative analysis which might assist understanding in how levels of supports through the scheme have changed over time for different kinds of participants.

Ministers agreed to further discussion on scheme financial sustainability at their next meeting in February 2022.

As at 30 September 2021, the NDIS was supporting 484,700 participants. In addition, 13,600 children were receiving initial supports through the NDIS early childhood approach. With the Commonwealth and states and territories sharing collective governance and funding of the scheme, Ministers reiterated their commitment to ensuring the NDIS is fully funded and providing supports for those with permanent and significant disability; with all participants in the scheme receiving the reasonable and necessary supports they need to live an ordinary life.

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 through the phases of the National Plan.

Ministers acknowledged the sharing of data between the Commonwealth and states and territories to guide the vaccination rollout to people with disability going forward, including the ongoing sharing of vaccination data by Local Government Area (LGA) and disability type in each jurisdiction.

Ministers acknowledged the shared responsibility of all governments to coordinate services to support prompt discharge from hospital for NDIS participants and recent actions by the NDIA to enhance co-ordination between agencies and jurisdictions. Ministers agreed to consider actions to enhance coordination and information sharing between agencies and jurisdictions and report on this work in 2022.

Ministers also agreed to continue work in 2022 to develop options to improve the supply of affordable and appropriate mainstream housing and NDIS funded accommodation for people with disability. Ministers also agreed the importance of engaging with respective Ministers for Housing in each jurisdiction as part of this further work.

Ministers noted work by the NDIA to identify, prevent and respond to payment non-compliance and fraud. There is a significant cumulative cost to the scheme of non-compliant claiming behaviour where it remains unaddressed; and the costs are not just financial. These behaviours limit the choice and control of participants, erode value for money and undermine the sustainability of the NDIS.

The Agency maintains a zero-tolerance approach to fraud and invests heavily in the prevention and detection of fraud. Ministers agreed to collectively consider further measures as part of their 2022 Work Plan, including if necessary legislative changes.

Finally, Ministers acknowledged the significant contribution of outgoing NDIA Chairman, Dr Helen Nugent AO, to the implementation of the NDIS. During a five-year period, Dr Nugent has overseen the transition of the scheme from providing supports to just over 61,000 participants to a truly national scheme delivering significant benefits to almost 500,000 Australians with disability.

Ministers agreed to meet again in February 2022.