

**DISABILITY REFORM MINISTERS' MEETING (DRMM)
MELBOURNE – 13 December 2022**

COMMUNIQUÉ

Commonwealth, State and Territory Disability Ministers met on 13 December 2022 in Melbourne. Ministers welcomed the new Victorian Minister for Disability, Ageing and Carers, the Hon Lizzie Blandthorn MP to her first meeting and thanked the Hon Colin Brooks MP for his contribution as outgoing Victorian Minister. Ministers noted apologies from the WA Minister for Disability Services, the Hon Don Punch MLA.

Co-Chairs of the NDIS Review Panel, Professor Bruce Bonyhady AM and Ms Lisa Paul AO PSM, updated Ministers on the NDIS Review forward work and consultation and engagement plans. They also discussed the need to focus NDIS on achieving outcomes for participants and the critical importance of high quality data for improving outcomes, effectiveness and sustainability over time. The Review has already consulted over 1,400 Australians.

Mr Graeme Innes AM, Chair of the NDIA Independent Expert Review (IER) Program Oversight Committee, presented an interim report on possible long term solutions to improve the handling of disputes of NDIA decisions. Ministers agreed further work be undertaken on a potential reform model in 2023.

Ministers welcomed Dr Ben Gauntlett, Chair of the Australia's Disability Strategy Disability Advisory Council, who presented on Australia's Disability Strategy and the work of the Disability Advisory Council, including key priorities for 2023. Ministers endorsed the Disability Advisory Council terms of reference and agreed to expand Council membership by four members, identified from state and territory councils. Ministers also noted that the final report from the previous National Disability Strategy will be published.

Ministers also considered:

- **Data and outcomes:** Ministers agreed in-principle to progress a Memorandum of Understanding in early 2023 to support governance of the National Disability Data Asset noting individual funding arrangements are subject to bilateral negotiation. Ministers discussed the need to progress resolution of a NDIS Reserve Fund as a potential funding source for jurisdictions that had unspent contributions as at 30 June 2019. Ministers agreed the importance of evidence and data in support for people with disability to strengthen outcomes. Ministers agreed that NDIA should develop a data strategy and make data available to researchers in a timely and secure basis. Ministers endorsed Australia's Disability Strategy Data Improvement Plan to improve the quality and collection of disability data over the ten-year life of the Strategy, recognising the Plan has been developed in consultation with disability representative organisations.
- **Disability Royal Commission:** Ministers discussed key themes emerging from the Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People with Disability, including states and territories aligning with the Principles for Nationally Consistent Authorisation for Restrictive Practices.
- **Allied Health – Registration and Worker Screening:** With demand for allied health growing, Ministers noted the different registration and worker screening requirements for allied health practitioners and discussed the broader implications around quality and safeguards for NDIS participants. Ministers noted that the NDIS Review would consider how to improve current arrangements.
- **Australia's Disability Strategy:** Ministers noted the 2-3 November 2022 National Forum on Australia's Disability Strategy with more than 950 people participating in sessions with a detailed report due early 2023 on areas people with disability advised additional effort is needed to drive change.

- **Regulation of Assistance Animals:** Ministers agreed to settle out of session national principles to help work towards greater consistency for assistance animal users to enable them to travel across state and territory borders with greater ease and certainty, noting implementation arrangements will require further consultation and detailed consideration by Ministers.
- **Changing Places:** Ministers discussed the initiative to ensure access to specialised accessible 'Changing Places' public toilet facilities across Australia, noting the Commonwealth Government's commitment of \$32.2 million over the forward estimates.
- **Supported employment principles and transition plan:** Ministers agreed to guiding principles, with NSW to consider further prior to endorsement, which promotes shared action and planning to evolve the supported employment sector so it remains viable, and better meets community expectations.
- **Hospital Discharge:** Ministers noted significant operational reforms implemented by the NDIA and health and hospital services to reduce discharge delays from 160 to 36 days. Disability Ministers discussed next steps to support the delivery of work on improving care pathways for people with disability following National Cabinet's agreement to address pressures on the health and hospital system in addition to achievements in speeding up hospital discharge.
- **COVID-19:** Ministers noted that there is a continued need for targeted and effective measures to support and protect people with disability, including delivering more education about ventilation particularly for those most at risk of severe illness and death. Dr Michelle Ananda-Rajah MP, Member for Higgins, presented on current evidence around disability responses, particularly the importance of ventilation in maintaining safe indoor environments, and access to antivirals.
- **NDIS Fraud:** Ministers noted through the October 2022 Federal Budget the establishment of the NDIS Fraud Fusion Taskforce, co-chaired by the NDIA and Services Australia, to work closely with Commonwealth agencies and police from across states and territories to strengthen fraud detection and better safeguard the NDIS from serious and organised criminal entities.

Ministers agreed to meet again in February 2023.