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**2012 – A year in review**

The [National People with Disabilities and Carer Council](http://www.fahcsia.gov.au/our-responsibilities/disability-and-carers/program-services/consultation-and-advocacy/national-people-with-disabilities-and-carer-council) was established in September 2008 to provide advice to the Australian Government on issues affecting people with disability, their families and carers. The Council provides advice to the Minister for Disability Reform, the Hon Jenny Macklin MP, and the Parliamentary Secretary for Disabilities and Carers, Senator the Hon Jan McLucas.

Council is chaired by Dr Rhonda Galbally and there are 29 members.

During 2012 the Council met formally in March, June, September and November, with ministerial representation at every meeting. In the course of the year the Council liaised with the National Disability and Carer Alliance, disability peak bodies, specialist advisory groups, senior representatives of FaHCSIA and other Australian Government departments.

Following is a snapshot of the work undertaken by Council during 2012:

National Disability Insurance Scheme

The design and development of the [National Disability Insurance Scheme](http://www.ndis.gov.au/) (NDIS) was a key area of work throughout the year, and Council was briefed by   Australian Government representatives of the NDIS Taskforce and the NDIS Launch Transition Agency. The NDIS is a standing item on the Council’s work agenda with members promoting the scheme within their respective state and other networks.

Members are advising on the development and design of this important new initiative by actively participating in consultation mechanisms. Council members
Dr Rhonda Galbally, Dr Ken Baker and Dr Lorna Hallahan are also members of the NDIS Advisory Group. Some Council members are also members of NDIS expert groups.

In particular, Council has considered advice on capacity building, engagement, the need for a user-friendly system, relationship with mainstream services, how to get lower level services right, entitlement of eligibility, entry points, advocacy and addressing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander specific issues. Council also suggested a greater involvement of people with disability in the work to build the NDIS, including tender processes, project specifications and the building blocks.

In all of its advice Council reiterates the importance of people with disability being central to decision making.

Another issue to receive special attention from Council in 2012 was the proposed definition of psychiatric disability under the NDIS, with Council suggesting that the more appropriate terminology to use is ‘psychosocial disability’. It is inappropriate to use the term psychiatric as the impairments are not due to the psychiatric illness but the effects of the illness. Minister Jenny Macklin gave a [speech on the NDIS](http://jennymacklin.fahcsia.gov.au/node/2145) to the National Press Club on 31 October 2012. In this speech Minister Macklin announced that the term used in future would be psychosocial disability.

In the later part of the year Council members also provided input to the User Testing (Resource Materials) for the National Disability Services Standards and the NDIS evaluation proposal. Council comments on the evaluation proposal emphasised the importance that the scheme not respond to problems or shortfalls in mainstream services by providing its own substitute services and also raised issues about how the individualised funding model used by the NDIS will fit with programmatically funded mainstream services (e.g. health, justice, education).

The [legislation for the NDIS](http://www.ndis.gov.au/towards/ndis-draft-legislation/) was introduced into Parliament on 29 November 2012. The Bill creates the framework for a national scheme, including eligibility criteria, age requirements, and what constitutes reasonable and necessary support. Council provided advice on the draft legislation, which covered a range of areas, including strengthening the objects around Article 19 of the UN Convention of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, independent review processes, need for a public advocate type role, governance advice, and independent advocacy.

Several members of Council were in Parliament to witness the Prime Minister and Minister Macklin introduce this historic legislation.

Throughout 2012 Council also discussed the [National Injury Insurance Scheme](http://ministers.treasury.gov.au/DisplayDocs.aspx?doc=pressreleases/2012/037.htm&pageID=003&min=brs&Year=&DocType=0).
Dr Rhonda Galbally is the Council’s representative on the National Injury Insurance Scheme Advisory Group.

National Disability Strategy

Advising on the implementation plan for the [National Disability Strategy](http://www.fahcsia.gov.au/our-responsibilities/disability-and-carers/program-services/government-international/national-disability-strategy) involved substantial work for Council, particularly in the reporting and evaluation areas.   The Strategy is a standing item on the Council’s ongoing work agenda and underpins all of the disability reform work underway.

For all other disability reform measures to succeed, a strong National Disability Strategy is vital to influence the wider mainstream systems. It is important that the National Disability Strategy remains high on the Government’s reform agenda.

A National Disability Strategy Implementation Reference Group has been established with representatives from Council and peak bodies.

The Council representatives are Dr Rhonda Galbally, Dr Ken Baker,
Alan Blackwood, Samantha Jenkinson and Belinda Epstein-Frisch.

The role of the Group is to advise on the implementation of the Strategy and provide updates to Council.

At its first meeting the Group highlighted the importance of ensuring that the NDS is positioned as the driving force for all levels of governments on disability reform. It also highlighted the importance of continued reform in mainstream services to help ensure the National Disability Insurance Scheme is able to work as effectively as possible.

The Group is looking at ways to implement change in some of the key mainstream systems – education, employment, housing, transport and rehabilitation. The Group also looked at the intersection between the Strategy and the National Disability Insurance Scheme, and the monitoring and evaluation processes for the Strategy. More information on the reference group is available in the [media release](http://janmclucas.fahcsia.gov.au/node/210).

The National Disability Strategy Development Officials Working Group also meets with representatives of disability advisory bodies across the nation. Dr Galbally represents Council at these annual meetings.

Rehabilitation

Rehabilitation was identified by Council as an important issue under the National Disability Strategy, National Disability Insurance Scheme and National Injury Insurance Scheme and Council is keen to ensure that it is considered in the reform agenda. A paper was presented to Council on the differences between public and private systems of rehabilitation.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders

A [Ten Point Plan](http://www.fpdn.org.au/latest-news/2-fpdn-10-point-plan-for-the-implementation-for-the-ndis-in-aboriginal-communities) for the Implementation of the National Disability Insurance Scheme in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Communities was presented to Council for endorsement. The plan was presented by the First Peoples Disability Network Australia and endorsed at the November meeting.

Education

Council provided representation on education working groups and worked closely with the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations on this outcome.

There are major reforms in education underway, in particular, the Review of the Disability Standards for Education, Review of Funding for Schooling (Gonski) report, the draft F-10 Australian Curriculum, NAPLAN testing and accessibility for students with disability.

Dr Rhonda Galbally and Alan Blackwood represent Council on the [Schools Disability Advisory Council](http://deewr.gov.au/schools-disability-advisory-council), and Dr Galbally was also appointed to the Ministerial Reference Group on School Funding in March 2012.

Council provided detailed advice on the importance of inclusive curricula in all schools to ensure students with special education needs are not left out. On the NAPLAN, Council are concerned with the exemption of students with disability from undertaking testing and would like to see a comparative rating of Australian schools that covers inclusiveness and culture. Council is pleased that schools are expected to develop an improvement plan to continue to receive funding.

Professor Robert Conway of Flinders University presented to Council on Inclusion: Concepts, policies, practices in Australian schools. Professor Conway noted that his research shows secondary school specialist teachers do not focus on inclusion. The National Plan for School Improvement will provide an opportunity to work with the states and territories on increasing awareness and inclusion for children with disability.

Transport

Accessible transport is a priority under the National Disability Strategy, with Council providing advice on expanding accessible transport options in Australia, including community buses, safety of mobility aids while in transit, and education for the transport sector.

In August, Council provided a submission on the draft Terms of Reference for the [*2012 Review of the Disability Standards for Accessible Public Transport 2002*](http://www.infrastructure.gov.au/transport/disabilities/review/2012.aspx). Council notes that public submissions for the review will close on 5 April 2013.

Nicole Lawder represents Council on the Accessible Public Transport National Advisory Committee.

Employment

Employment continues to be an area of concern for Council, with members noting Australia’s poor rates of employment of people with disability, rating 21 out of 29 OECD countries.

There are two types of [Disability Employment Services](http://deewr.gov.au/disability-employment-services) (DES): Disability Management Services and Employment Support Services. Council provided advice on the 2012 tender process for employment services, especially the need for providers to be connected with other services; concerns regarding impact of existing relationships that clients with disability may have; the quality and performance framework; the importance of employees; and the ability of employers to support all people with disability, not just those seeking entry level positions.

Council examined the [*Inclusive Employment 2012-2022: A vision for support employment*](http://www.fahcsia.gov.au/our-responsibilities/disability-and-carers/publications-articles/policy-research/inclusive-employment-2012-2022-a-vision-for-supported-employment) paper and provided advice on how this vision can be promoted and operationalised.

Employees with disability are underrepresented in the Australian Public Service (APS) and a reference group to the APS Diversity Council has been established with Dr Rhonda Galbally nominated as a subject matter expert in April. The aim of the Diversity Council is to contribute towards improving employment outcomes for diverse group across the APS.

National Carer Strategy

The [National Carer Strategy](http://www.fahcsia.gov.au/disability-and-carers/news/2012/implementation-of-the-national-carer-strategy) Implementation Plan and first Action Plan 2011-2014 were released in 2012.

Advice provided by Council covered data, awareness raising with general practitioners and other health professionals, identification of ‘hidden’ carers, and promotion of government programs.

A National Carer Strategy Implementation Reference Group was established this year, comprising representatives of peak organisations, key stakeholder groups and carers. The Group will focus on carers of people with disability, people with mental illness, people with a medical condition and the frail aged. Council is represented by Tim Moore on this reference group.

National Carer Awareness Campaign

McCann World Group presented to Council on the National Carer Awareness Campaign, which included a 24 hour concert by the [Impossible Orchestra](http://careaware.com.au/the-impossible-orchestra/). Council provided strong advice on the Campaign to ensure that the messaging focuses on the caring relationship, rather than carers portrayed as martyrs and people with disability portrayed as burdens.

The Impossible Orchestra played for 24 hours on 27-28 October 2012 to highlight carer awareness. Samantha Jenkinson is the Council representative on the National Carer Awareness Campaign Reference Group.

Data

Representatives from the Australian Bureau of Statistics provided Council members with an overview of the sources of disability and carers statistical information under the Survey of Disability and Carers (SDAC) and Council involvement in the consultation process for the SDAC data collection due to commence in
January 2013.

Consultation on the [2016 Census](http://www.abs.gov.au/websitedbs/censushome.nsf/home/2016) has also begun, with public submissions closing on 31 May 2013.

The Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW) also provided an update to Council on their work, namely the National Minimum Data Set redevelopment project and the disability identifier (which is an initiative under the National Disability Strategy). Representatives of Council also met with the AIHW out of session to further this work.

ABC Ramp Up

The Australian Government has partnered with the ABC since 2010 to develop and maintain the [Ramp Up](http://www.abc.net.au/rampup/) website in an effort to improve access to information and advocacy for people with disability. Ramp Up was developed in response to the consultations undertaken by Council for the National Disability Strategy, which identified the need for better information for people with disability, as well as strategies to reduce isolation and build community capacity.

The Council initiated and oversaw the development of Ramp Up. Wendy Harmer and Dr Rhonda Galbally developed the proposal and advocated with ABC to provide the platform and matching support with FaHCSIA. The focus into the future is working with ABC to integrate and sustain Ramp Up into its core business.

At the June 2012 Council meeting, Stella Young, moderator of the Ramp Up website presented to Council on the work of the site and encouraged Council to become involved. Council noted the operations and the broader commitment of the ABC to disability dialogue, including the ability to be responsive to new issues through the building of relationships, and increasing exposure of disability issues through other media. Ms Young also travelled to London to report the 2012 Paralympics on   Ramp Up.

Universal Housing

Council is represented on the [National Dialogue on Universal Housing Design](http://www.fahcsia.gov.au/our-responsibilities/disability-and-carers/program-services/government-international/national-disability-strategy/livable-housing-design/national-dialogue-on-universal-housing-design-strategic-plan) by Belinda Epstein-Frisch. The national dialogue and the work of Liveable Housing Australia in developing targets were discussed during 2012, with Council recommending a mandatory minimum regulation, rather than a voluntary national code for universal housing.

Leaders for Tomorrow

The [Leaders for Tomorrow](http://www.fahcsia.gov.au/our-responsibilities/disability-and-carers/program-services/for-people-with-disability/leaders-for-tomorrow) Advisory Group met in February 2012. The meeting covered program logistics and evaluation framework, the exclusion of people with psychosocial disability, the inclusion of people from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders, and the mentor process.

Lesley Hall represents Council on the Leaders for Tomorrow advisory group.

Children with Disability

The [Better Start for Children with Disability Program](http://www.fahcsia.gov.au/our-responsibilities/disability-and-carers/program-services/for-people-with-disability/better-start-for-children-with-disability-initiative) was evaluated during 2012. Council provided advice on the evaluation framework, namely the importance of measuring outcomes, including statistical analysis on the results. Also the evaluation should focus on the transition from the program into regular schooling. The issue of future service use is also important, with advice on how the program can be improved to inform parents on possible but not locally available services.

Cyber-safety

In February 2012, Council provided a submission to the House of Representatives Joint Select Committee [Inquiry into Cyber-Safety for Senior Australians](http://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Committees/House_of_Representatives_Committees?url=jscc/senior_australians/index.htm), highlighting that many people with disability face similar issues and barriers that seniors face. Council promoted the need for older people with disability to be included in the development of the education initiatives.

National Disability Awards

Council provided advice on the [National Disability Awards](http://www.idpwd.com.au/awards/) processes, including selection criteria and other documentation and several Council members attended the gala Awards ceremony held at the National Gallery of Australia in Canberra on 28 November 2012. Council members also promote the awards within their individual state networks.

Two Council members received two of the prestigious awards in 2012:

* Dr Rhonda Galbally was awarded the 2012 Prime Minister’s Outstanding Achievement Award for her work in disability rights over the past 30 years, including the establishment of the National Disability and Carer Alliance and her work on the development of the National Disability Insurance Scheme.
* Samantha Jenkinson was awarded the Minister’s Award for Excellence in Disability Reform for her work in disability reform both nationally and within Western Australia, participating on a number of ministerial advisory bodies and committees. See more information on the idpwd website: <http://www.idpwd.com.au/7470/national-disability-award-recipients-announced/>