13 May 2024

This is a summary of the Participant Reference Group's (PRG) recent out of session meeting. The PRG consists of 23 participant and carer representatives across Australia. The PRG is a key platform to ensure the participant voice is heard and understood by the National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA). Feedback from meetings is used to inform strategy, policy development, system and service delivery development and review, to support continuous improvement.

Chairperson's welcome

Donna Purcell, NDIA Branch Manager, Office of the Participant Advocate welcomed members to an out of session meeting on Co-design and the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS).

This is the fourth PRG meeting for 2024.

Debbie Irvine, Director, Participant First, introduced Alexandria Rosenthal and Jamie Bannister from the Co-design Branch, to talk about proposed changes we are making to co-design at the NDIA.

Presentation. Our approach to working with the Australian disability community.

The Co-design Branch spoke to the PRG about the NDIA's draft approach to co-design in the future.

There are currently 6 co-design working groups in the NDIA. The next phase of co-design will support the implementation of some NDIS review recommendations. It is expected the number of topics we will need to do co-design on will increase because of the NDIS legislation and NDIS Review recommendations.

The group talked about the co-design process and the Agency's commitment to co-design.

We broke into groups and asked PRG members if the proposed co-design approach made sense, if the commitment to co-design was right, and what role the PRG could have in making this approach work.

Proposed co-design approach and commitment

We heard:

- We need to have more detail about accountability and implementation of the approach. How will the NDIA make sure the co-design principles will be followed?
- Participant safety needs to be included as a commitment and should be planned for in all co-design work
- Look to other organisations that make meetings as safe as possible. For example, have an order of speaking so everyone has a turn to talk and have a wellbeing and safety officer for people to be able to call if something is discussed during a meeting that was unsafe.
- Make sure the power balance between participants and NDIS staff is equal. Co-design will only work if the power is shared.
- Address conflict in this process and how it is resolved.
- Individual accessibility and communication needs must be met.
- We need a shared platform for meeting documents and information that is accessible to everyone.
- Time is important, don't rush the co-design process to get a resolution.
- We need to remove vague language and make the co-design process clear and easy to understand for everyone.
- Involve as many participant voices as possible, including those from rural and remote communities.
- Help people self-advocate so they can speak up for themselves and others.

What role can the PRG have in making the co-design approach work?

We heard:

- PRG members had a strong interest to be involved in co-design reforms, including on working groups as needed.
- When a PRG member's term is up, there can be great benefit to keep them involved in co-design work, so their knowledge and skills are transferred.
- Confidence and trust between participants and the NDIA takes time to build and can't be rushed. Being part of groups like the PRG helps make participants better advocates.
- Don't assume PRG members do not have availability to be involved in co-design in many different ways, and frequently. Provide options on being involved.
- PRG could meet as a group more often to stay informed about many different co-design topics and provide feedback.
- Tell PRG members about opportunities to be involved in other working groups.

Final comments and close

The group spoke about meeting options to discuss urgent topics that might come up. Some options are to extend the time of the monthly PRG meetings or arrange out of session meetings like this. There is a lot of consultation and co-design work happening at the moment and it is important to get feedback from PRG members.

Donna Purcell told the group that if we do hold an out of session meeting, it is not compulsory to attend. We will give as much notice as possible and understand not everyone will be available at short notice. Members who cannot attend are welcome to provide feedback in other ways.

Donna and Debbie thanked all members for attending this out of session meeting to give such valuable feedback to the Co-Design Branch.

Next meeting

Wednesday, 8 May 2024

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