3 April 2014

Prominent mental health and disability expert Eddie Bartnik has been engaged as a strategic adviser to the National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA).

NDIA chairman Bruce Bonyhady said Mr Bartnik has just completed his term as Western Australia's first Mental Health Commissioner. He will play a key part in ensuring the Agency's approach to mental health is robust and appropriate and will bring his vast experience in disability, especially local area coordination and community capacity building, to the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS).

"We are thrilled to welcome Mr Bartnik he has a long list of achievements in mental health and human services reform, most recently as inaugural WA Mental Health Commissioner," Mr Bonyhady said.

"As Commissioner, he successfully established the Mental Health Commission as a new state government agency, overseeing 80 service provision contracts with public, private and community organisations supporting more than 48,000 people with mental illness," he said.

"Mental illness and psychosocial disability are complex subjects in their own right and present significant challenges in relation to the NDIS.

"For example, the concept of permanent impairment that is central to the framing of the NDIS does not sit easily within the framework and language of recovery which are the basis of current best practice in mental health.

"Mr Bartnik's experience and leadership will be pivotal in navigating these challenges and informing the Agency's approach to these very important issues."

Mr Bartnik will commence his new role on 28 April 2014 through a three-year consultancy contract.

He previously contributed to debate around the NDIS and looks forward to being directly involved in the Scheme.

"The NDIS is a much-needed reform that enables people with disability and their families to plan and build a good life in the community and have choice and control over the implementation of their reasonable and necessary supports," Mr Bartnik said.

"I am excited to be a part of this landmark reform and its role in improving the lives of people with disability and their families," he said.

Eddie Bartnik biography

Eddie Bartnik has just completed his three-and-a-half year term as Western Australia's first Mental Health Commissioner, the first position of its kind in Australia. He led mental health reform and oversaw the Commissioning of public, private and community sector mental health services to over 48,000 people with a budget in excess of $650 million.

He joined the mental health sector from his previous position as Acting Director General of the Department for Communities in WA, following a long career as a Director with the Disability Services Commission where he had a lead role in the establishment and implementation of the state-wide Local Area Coordination program in Western Australia and then nationally and internationally.

Eddie has worked extensively and published across Australia and overseas in areas of human services reform and individualised funding/personalised support, with 25 years' direct experience of this approach. He also has extensive experience at a state and national level in disability and mental health policy development, services planning and implementation.

He is Fellow of the Australian Institute of Management, a Fellow of the Australasian Society for Intellectual Disability and a graduate of the Australian Institute of Company Directors. He holds master's degrees in clinical psychology from the University of WA and educational studies from the University of Tasmania. In 2013-14 he received awards from both Mental Health Carers WA and The Foundation for Social Inclusion.

Eddie led development and implementation of the strategic policy "Mental Health 2020: Making it Personal and Everybody's Business" and presented the Australian keynote address at the International Initiative for Mental Health Leadership conference in New Zealand in 2013. He also supports Local Area Coordination projects and disability reform in New Zealand and the UK. He has unique experience of long-term systems reform across a range of contexts.

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