3 April 2020

The Government is committed to ensuring the well-being of Australians with disability are considered as the coronavirus pandemic unfolds.

As such, an advisory group has been established by the Federal Government to guide development and implementation of a response plan focusing on the unique health needs of people with disability during the coronavirus pandemic.

The advisory group, endorsed yesterday by the Australian Health Protection Principal Committee (AHPPC), will develop and implement the Management and Operational Plan for People with Disability.

The Plan will form part of the Australian Health Sector Emergency Response Plan for the Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19) and will ensure the health care needs of people with disability, their families and carers can be met during the pandemic, including access to coronavirus screening, prevention and health care.

The Plan will give priority to individuals whose disability and current health status places them at the greatest risk from coronavirus. This includes people with intellectual disability and people who have complex support needs— behavioural, social, or physical—to undertake the activities of daily living.

Measures to ensure continuity of essential support for NDIS participants, workers and providers through the coronavirus outbreak were announced on 21 March, following discussions by the Council of Australian Governments' Disability Reform Council (DRC), with an update to be provided to the next DRC meeting scheduled for next week.

The advisory group will hold its first meeting on Friday 3 April with an aim to deliver the Plan to the AHPCC on Thursday 9 April, for immediate action.

The advisory group is chaired by a senior official from the Department of Health and includes experts from the disability sector, academia, clinical practice, nursing, Australian government officials, and state and territory government representatives.

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