14 October 2021

Joint statement – National Disability Insurance Agency, NDIS Independent Advisory Council and Disability Representative and Carer organisations

The NDIA and key disability community stakeholders participated in two virtual co-design workshops in September 2021.

The workshops brought together 27 disability and carer representative organisations (DCROs), the NDIS Independent Advisory Council (the Council), the Department of Social Services (DSS), NDIA board members and senior executives.

Former Disability Discrimination Commissioner Graeme Innes facilitated both workshops, supported by facilitators from the disability community.

Purpose of co-design workshops

The workshops were held following a decision by disability ministers in July 2021 to not proceed with the proposal for independent assessments.

The NDIA acted on advice from the Council to strengthen relationships and build trust with the disability sector, and respond to Terms of Engagement provided by the disability sector to Minister Reynolds in June 2021.

The workshops were an opportunity to develop a constructive working relationship between the NDIA, the Council and DRCOs and to begin co-design and priority issue discussions.

Workshop discussion topics

Workshop attendees discussed what led to the breakdown in mutual trust, how to strengthen the relationships between the disability community and the NDIA, and a range of priorities for changes and improvements to the NDIS.

This included the topics the NDIA, Council and the disability sector have been asked to work on by disability ministers, and how the NDIA could start working towards co-design.

Workshop attendees discussed how the NDIA could establish a co-design framework based on a “learn by doing” approach, agree on key principles of co-design and terms of engagement.

The NDIA committed to learn from the past and engage constructively with the disability community in future. Read the NDIA CEO's reflections on the first workshop.

Outcomes of co-design workshops

Workshop attendees acknowledged:

1. The need to improve relationships and build trust between the NDIA and the disability community.

2. The shared commitment to work towards better outcomes for people with disability and to improve Scheme processes.

3. The need to better understand interactions between the range of issues faced by people with disability, sector organisations and the Scheme, and how they can be jointly resolved.

4. The need to work together to better understand the issues the Scheme is facing, including financial sustainability, from all stakeholder perspectives.

5.The shared commitment to immediately work on priorities which would benefit from co-designed solutions such as a new person-centred assessment model as well as ending segregation for people with disability and strengthening community inclusion.

6. The focus on a range of improvements to the operations of the NDIS.

7. The need to recognise and respect the importance of diverse views, experience and contributions made by the Scheme, DSS, the Council and disability and carer representative organisations; acknowledging

- DRCOs as the legitimate representatives of participants and families/caregivers
- Council's statutory role to advise the NDIA Board as outlined in the NDIS Act, including their appointed experts among which are people with disability, families/carers and service providers
- the NDIA as the statutory authority responsible for delivering the NDIS in accordance with the Act
- DSS as responsible for the NDIS legislation, for the Information Linkages and Capacity Building program, and the broader Australian Disability Strategy.

8. The importance of regular and accessible communication with participants, families and carers as well as state, territory and local community groups and networks and provider networks, to inform and enable involvement.

9. The importance of agreement about the governance of the relationships and the processes used in any joint work between the sector and the NDIA.

10. That these co-design workshops were a first step in developing better ways of working together to benefit participants and the Scheme. There is a more to do.

Next steps

1. Co-design advisory group

Leaders from the Council and the DRCOs will select representatives to form the co-design advisory group. Advisory group members will be paid for their time.

The first meeting of this new group is planned for mid-October 2021.

2. Confirm co-design priority work

NDIA representatives will work with a small group of Council and disability sector representatives to establish initial co-design priority work, for consideration by the broader disability sector.

The advisory group and the sector will also consider other work that would benefit from a strategic approach to stakeholder consultation and involvement.

3. Information updates

The NDIA, the Council and disability and carer representative organisations will agree on a regular schedule to inform the disability community of co-design topics and progress, and advise any key issues requiring wider consultation.

An Easy Read version (PDF 5.8MB) of the NDIA Co-Design Workshops Joint Statement is also available.

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