23 September 2020

The National Mental Health Sector Reference Group met on Wednesday September 16, 2020 by video conference.

This is the third meeting of this Reference Group for the year. Gerry Naughtin (Chair) welcomed Dr Elizabeth Moore representing the Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Psychiatrists (RANZCP), and Trent Tolra as the new Branch Manager, Agency Policy Branch, Advice Research and Evaluation Division, NDIA.

Key highlights and issues discussed:

Data presentation by Office of Scheme Actuary (OSA)

Fiona Walsh (OSA) provided a report on Scheme data for psychosocial disability to 30 June 2020. Key points:

- 41,277 participants with primary psychosocial disability and 5,677 new participants with psychosocial disability
- Committed annual expenditure of $2.16 billion for psychosocial disability in 2019-2020, a $1.03 billion increase on 2018-2019.
- Average plan value for people with psychosocial disability (excluding Supported Independent Living (SIL)) is $60,063.

Briefings on Government’s Response to Tune Review

Tune Review and Psychosocial Disability

Sarah Hawke, Department of Social Services (DSS) provided a briefing on the Government’s response to the Tune Review on Friday 28 August 2020. The Government supports, or supports in principle, all 29 recommendations and supports.

The link to the Government Response to Tune Review can be found on the DSS website at - Government response to the NDIS act review

What does this mean for people with psychosocial disability?

- Recommendation 8 includes providing clearer guidance in considering whether a psychosocial impairment is permanent, recognising that some conditions are episodic or

fluctuating. And removing reference to ‘psychiatric conditions’ when determining eligibility and replacing with ‘psychosocial disability’.
- Recommendation 10 – is about the NDIA developing a comprehensive outreach strategy for engaging with people with disability who are unaware of, or are reluctant to seek support from the NDIS, with a dedicated focus on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, culturally and linguistically diverse communities and people with psychosocial disability.

Next steps

- The Government is now looking at a timeframe for draft legislation with the intention being to introduce the legislation in 2021.

The Minister has noted the engagement and consultation will be comprehensive, conducted in urban, regional, rural and remote areas by every method possible during the COVID-19 restrictions. The department and the NDIA are working to develop a framework for consultation and engagement with the NDIA leading engagement on the introduction of independent assessments.

Changes to improve NDIS for people with psychosocial disability

Sam Bennett, General Manager, Advice, Research and Evaluation Division briefed the meeting on three significant proposed changes to the Scheme that Minister Robert announced on August 28.

- The NDIA has been looking at how to improve the consistency, reliability and equity of access and planning decisions in response to the Tune Review and looking ahead to post-transition Scheme design requirements.
- Three important and interlinked changes:
    - Independent Assessments (IA): to improve consistency and fairness in NDIA decision making for access and planning
    - Personalised budgets: changes to planning so that reasonable and necessary plan budgets for all participants are more closely informed by IA information
    - Plan flexibility: simplified plans that enable participant choice and control
- The introduction of IAs funded by NDIA and based on a person’s functional capacity, including environmental factors and strengths (not diagnosis) will mean fairer, more objective decisions.
- The improved quality and consistency of information about participants and their needs, will be used to shift the emphasis of planning from line by line negotiation of supports to

helping participants set and achieve their goals within a (largely) flexible budget.
- The NDIA will consult and engage with states and territories, and other key stakeholders across the sector, over coming months to ensure we get these changes right for participants and the Scheme.

Reports from members

Members' reports highlighted the extraordinary efforts that participants, families and carers and service providers have made in responding to the pandemic, protecting themselves and providing supports in different ways including video connections. The meeting discussed some of the impacts of the changes that have had to occur and the need to understand what the new normal might look like.

Next Meeting

November 26, 2020

Meeting Close

Gerry Naughtin, NMHSRG Chair said, "The briefing from the staff of the Office of the Scheme Actuary highlights the solid progress the Scheme is making in implementing the NDIS for people with psychosocial disability. Over the next 12 months, there will be a suite of further reforms continuing to improve better service and outcomes. This was a busy and vibrant meeting".

Attendees

Chairperson

Dr Gerry Naughtin, Strategic Advisor (Mental Health)

Members

Ms Janet Meagher AM, Independent Advisory Council Liaison
Mr Michael Burge OAM, Consumer Representative
Mr Evan Bichara, Consumer Representative
Ms Amy Wyndham, Mental Health Principal Committee
Ms Julia Colcott, Mental Health Principal Committee (for Ms Megan Boland)

Mr Ivan Frkovic, State and Territory Mental Health Commissions
Ms Kate Murray, National Mental Health Commission
Mr Bill Gye OAM, Community Mental Health Australia
Ms Harry Lovelock, Mental Health Australia
Dr Elizabeth Moore, Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Psychiatrists
Ms Sarah Hawke, Department of Social Services
Mr Sam Bennett, General Manager, NDIA Strategic Advice, Research and Inclusion Division
Mr Trent Tolra, Branch Manager, NDIA Agency Policy Branch
Ms Kathy McEwan, Branch Manager, NDIA Communities of Practice

Project Managers

Mr Mark Rosser, Director, NDIA Mental Health and Hard to Reach
Mr Malitha Perera, NDIA Strategic Advice, Research and Inclusion Division
Ms Erandathie Jayakody, NDIA Strategic Advice, Research and Inclusion Division
Ms Belinda Wilson, NDIA Mental Health Section
Ms Joanne Llewellyn, Department of Social Services
Mr Simon De Sousa, Department of Social Services

Invited Guests

Ms Teena Balgi, Mental Health Principal Committee
Ms Nicola Wright, Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Psychiatrists
Ms Kelly Stein, NDIA
Ms Fiona Walsh, NDIA Scheme Actuary
Ms Nicole Stransky, NDIA Scheme Actuary
Ms Felicia Auryn, NDIA Scheme Actuary

Apologies

Mr Patrick Hardwick, Carer Representative
Ms Anthea Raven, Commonwealth Department of Health
Ms Nikki Roach, Commonwealth Department of Health

Related articles

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Date
10 September 2020

Mental Health Sector June 2020 communique

Date
11 July 2020

Mental Health Sector April 2021 communique

Date
15 April 2021
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