26 September 2022

Australian Paralympic legend and disability advocate Kurt Fearnley AO has been appointed Chairman of the Board of the National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA).

The NDIA Board will also welcome new members Dr Graeme Innes AM and Ms Maryanne Diamond AO.

There are now five people with disability on the NDIA Board, including current board members Leah van Poppel and Meredith Allan, the largest number in its history.

Dr Denis Napthine AO, formerly Chair, will return as a Board Member.

After an extensive recruitment process, the National Disability Scheme (NDIS) will also have a new Chief Executive, with Rebecca Falkingham PSM accepting the role.

Ms Falkingham has extensive experience leading departments and major projects in NSW and Victoria. She joins the NDIS after spending several years as the Secretary of the Victorian Department of Justice and Community Safety in Victoria.

Ms Falkingham will be the first permanent female Chief Executive of the NDIA.

Quotes attributed to Minister for the NDIS Bill Shorten:

“I was thrilled Mr Fearnley accepted my offer to lead the NDIA Board. He will be the first person with disability to Chair the Board, heralding a new era for the scheme.

“Mr Fearnley is a trusted disability advocate and I rely on his knowledge and experience like the sector does.

“He holds a deep understanding of the NDIS and a history with the scheme. He was a serving member of the NDIS’ Independent Advisory Council during the trial phase of NDIS from 2013 to 2015 and the insight he will bring is invaluable.

“The new Board members each bring extensive experience in the corporate and public sectors as well as lived experience of disability.

“Having more people with disability in leadership positions will pivot the Scheme and rebuild trust with the disability sector.

“The work ahead is significant and I look forward to working together to create the best NDIS we can have and ensure positive outcomes for participants.

“Rebecca will bring a wealth of experience to the role and she will be the first permanent female Chief Executive in the NDIA’s history

“On a final note, I wish to thank Mr Jim Minto who has been acting NDIA Chair and Dr Lisa Studdert who has been Acting Chief Executive since July.”

Quotes attributed to Mr Kurt Fearnley AO:

“I am excited to get to know the role of the organisation and the people who work to empower people with disability to live a good life.

“Having people with disability in key positions on the board is essential if we are to live up to the principles of the Scheme’s formation 10 years ago.

“Alongside Graeme, Maryanne and Rebecca, I recognise this is the start line not the end of the journey.”

Comments attributed to Ms Rebecca Falkingham PSM:

“I am thrilled to be put at the helm of such an important national organisation, and I will work every day for the betterment of the Scheme and to rebuild trust among Australians with disability.”

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