Media release from the Minister - New partnership between NDIA and First Peoples Disability Network

28 February 2023

The National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA) is partnering with First Peoples Disability Network (FPDN) to co-design a new NDIS First Nations Strategy and action plan that reflects the goals and aspirations of First Nations experiences and voices.

Minister for the NDIS, Bill Shorten, welcomes this new partnership as a step in the right direction to make sure First Nations peoples with disability are directly involved in decisions that impact their lives.

“The collaboration between the NDIA and FPDN, exemplified by the new partnership, represents the type of cooperation necessary for the NDIS to thrive for all its participants,” Minister Shorten said.

“First Nations people with disability often have different experiences when it comes to accessing supports, and the First Peoples Disability Network can help guide the Scheme to ensure it is inclusive and representative.

“We’re focused on co-designing improvements to the Scheme. We want to make sure First Nations participants are heard and can meaningfully contribute to making the NDIS the best it can be.”

Damian Griffis, CEO of FPDN, said this partnership will integrate their long-standing grassroots knowledge and advocacy into improving the NDIS.

“We spend a lot of time in the community and we hear firsthand some of the big issues in terms of getting the Scheme working properly for mob. We're unique because we are First Nations people or First Nations people with disability,” Mr Griffis said.

“With this partnership, we’ll establish a First Nations Advisory Council (FNAC) to provide advice to the NDIA to get the NDIS working better for mob with disability.”

The FNAC will help make sure NDIA programs and initiatives are informed by First Nations voices and experiences, reflect the goals and hopes of First Nations communities, embed principles of self-determination and are culturally safe.

“Our expectations are high because we know the stakes are high and we need to make sure that our people with disability get fair access to the NDIS,” Mr Griffis said.

The membership of the FNAC will comprise First Nations people with disability, participants, peak bodies, organisations, sector and community representatives with specialist knowledge of First Nations issues.

The diverse composition of the FNAC prioritises lived experience and represents key intersections, such as between disability and the justice and housing sector.

The inaugural FNAC will occur on 10 March 2023. The FNAC will convene regularly and focus in the short-term on co-designing the NDIS First Nations Strategy.

The FNAC will then focus long-term on other actions to achieve enhanced outcomes for First Nations people with disability.

There will also be opportunities for the NDIS Review to tap into the partnership between the NDIA and FPDN.

The new First Nations Strategy will also align to the National Agreement on Closing the Gap. More information on the strategy can be found on the First Nations Strategy page.

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