21 February 2024

The NDIA met with Disability Representative and Carer Organisations (DRCOs) and Independent Advisory Council (IAC) members as part of the Reforms for Outcomes (RFO) co-design program to support the delivery of the Federal Government's 2023-24 budget initiatives.

The DRCOs represented at the 24 November RFO program quarterly meeting were: A4 Autism Aspergers Advocacy Australia, Australian Autism Alliance, Australian Federation of Disability Organisations, Blind Citizens Australia, Children and Young People with Disability Australia, Community Mental Health Australia, Deafblind Australia, Deafness Forum Australia, Disability Advocacy Network Australia, Down Syndrome Australia, Every Australian Counts, First Peoples Disability Network, Inclusion Australia, JFA Purple Orange, Mental Health Australia, National Ethnic Disability Alliance, National Mental Health Consumer and Carer Forum, People with Disability Australia, Physical Disability Australia, Self Advocacy Resource Unit, and Young People in Nursing Homes Alliance.

Representatives from the IAC included: Ms Leah van Poppel, Sylvana Mahmic, James Manders, Liz Reid, Dr George Taleporos, Samantha Jenkinson.

There were apologies from: Brain Injury Australia, Carers Australia, Deaf Australia, Jennifer Cullen (IAC member).

Representatives from the NDIA included: Corri McKenzie, Aaron Verlin, Matt Wright, Maria Gold, Mitchell Clegg. Kirsten Nield, Craig Hibbins, Wendy Addison, Kitsa Papadopoulos.

This summary covers topics discussed on Friday 24 November 2023.

Summary

Aaron Verlin, NDIA General Manager Co-design and Engagement, opened the meeting with welcoming remarks and general housekeeping.

Item 1. Update from RFO program Working Group

Mr Verlin introduced RFO Working Group Co-Chairs to provide an update on behalf of their Working group.

Better Planning Working Group update, provided by Co-Chair Nick Avery, Every Australian Counts

Ms Avery provided the following updates:

- The working group is close to finalising the Better Planning workplan.
- The working group is emphasising the importance of check-ins for participants who have underspent their funding, not just for participants who may be overspending their funding.
- The NDIA Service Guidance and Practice branch presented the new PACE NDIS plan approval letter to the working group for feedback.

Fraud Working Group update, provided by Co-Chairs Jenny Karavolos, Australian Autism Alliance and James Manders, IAC member

Mr Manders and Ms Karavolos provided the following updates:

- The Fraud working group has devoted time to ensure all members use consistent language to describe the problems they are trying to solve, and when discussing possible solutions. This has been critical when discussing how potential fraud can occur in different situations faced by people with different disabilities.
- The scope of the working group includes:
    - ensuring participants' physical safety and cyber integrity, not just financial safety
    - working with the NDIA to set up systems, and build Agency business cases for systems, to preventatively detect fraud and protect participants.
- The working group's workplan is broken up into different project areas:
    - Develop a campaign focused on helping support coordinators and plan managers do the right thing.
    - Build participant capacity to identify bad support coordinator and plan manager practices.
    - Educate NDIS staff on consistent practices and approaches to support participants to identify bad support coordinator and plan manager practices.
- Mr Manders encouraged RFO program members to share any examples of plan manager or support coordinator behaviour to help the working group further develop their spectrum.
- The working group is developing the Ethics and Human Oversight Framework to help keep participants safe. The Framework outlines how the NDIA and its 16 partnering organisations will work together to share information to help stop criminals exploiting participants, while safeguarding the welfare of participants.

Workforce Capability Working Group update, provided by Co-Chair Darryl Steff, Down Syndrome Australia

Mr Steff provided the following updates:

- The Workforce Capability working group is focused on improving consistency of access planning decisions through:

  - ensuring planners have a strong Scheme knowledge and understanding, including Agency processes, disability types and support needs
  - developing operational practices and guidelines to support planners.
- The working group has identified common themes to address through their work:
  - Workforce skills and capabilities
  - Planner specialisation
  - Planner training and education guidelines
  - More consistent communication approach with participants.
- The working group is prioritising working closely with the NDIA to ensure their recommendations can be implemented to ensure improvements can be achieved.
- At recent meetings the working group has focused on:
  - gaining further understanding of how the Agency currently operates
  - better understanding the role of planners and LACs and the core competencies and skills expected of these roles in interacting with participants.
- Next year the working group will focus on
  - how to approach the concept of staff knowledge
  - understanding support needs, and
  - understanding of disability and person centred practice.

Evidence Based Supports Working Group update, provided by Co-Chair Eileen McDonald, National Mental Health Consumer and Carer Forum (NMHCCF)

Ms McDonald provided the following updates:

- The Evidence Based Supports working group spent significant time clarifying its scope. The working group has increased the number of participants involved as members, and now includes members of diverse backgrounds, with diverse experiences and perspectives.
- The working group have agreed to a work plan, that sets out the areas of focus for the coming months. The work plan will initially focus on:
  - Establishing provider panels (starting with Assistive Technology).
  - Defining provider standards.
  - Options and channels to influence provider behaviour.
- Next year the working group will focus on clarifying the roles and expectations of support coordinators, and early childhood reporting templates.

Independent Living Working Group update, provided by Co-Chair Dr George Taleporos, IAC member

Dr Taleporos provided the following updates:

- The Independent Living working group is focused on the home and living pathway and end-to-end home and living process.
- The working group has focused on developing a deeper understanding of the current home and living process, including for planning and plan funding.
- The working group has identified three stages to investigate in greater detail, and have begun working with subject matter experts on these topics:

1. Support need identification and application for a decision
2. Assessment and funding decisions
3. How to access other supports.

Plan Flexibility Working Group update, provided by Co-Chair Kirsten Nield, NDIA

Ms Nield provided the following updates:

- The Plan Flexibility working group has identified two key themes for their initiative:
  - early intervention and transition
  - lifetime supports
- The working group is currently focusing on strengthening the eligibility reassessment process, including co-designing internal and external resources to support the process.
- The working group is also looking how to strengthen transition processes to empower people to access available mainstream and community services as they transition from the NDIS.

Item 2. NDIS Review Co-design Approach, led by Corri McKenzie, Deputy CEO, Service Design & Improvement

Ms McKenzie spoke to the Agency's proposed approach to build on the processes established with DRCOs and IAC members via the RFO program to design and implement responses to the Disability Royal Commission and NDIS Review recommendations.

Ms McKenzie noted the whole of government response to the recommendations will take time and committed to work in partnership with DRCOs and IAC members for any recommendation response led by the NDIA.

Ms McKenzie reaffirmed the work already underway through the RFO program remains vital and will continue in line with working groups' current work plans.

Item 3. Closing from Aaron Verlin, NDIA GM, Co-design & Engagement

Mr Verlin thanked meeting attendees, presenters and the interpreters for their participation and contribution to the November RFO program quarterly meeting.

RFO program quarterly meeting actions

Action item	Action lead	Status
Capture policy and legislative changes and pass through to the NDIS Review as part of this program of work.	Co-Design Delivery	Closed
Ensure the Outcomes Framework is part of working group discussions.	Co-Design Delivery	Ongoing
Investigate establishing cross-group meetings for groups working on similar initiatives, or where cross-over is identified between initiatives.	Co-Design Delivery	Ongoing
NDIA to work with working group co-chairs to provide responses to questions taken on notice.	NDIA Secretariat	In progress
Secretariat to share an updated list of Working Group members.	NDIA Secretariat	Closed
Kitsa Papadopoulos, GM Fraud Fusion Taskforce, to meet with Dr George Taleporos to discuss how self-management is being considered through the Fraud Fusion Taskforce and to understand integrity issues from the self-management working group's point of view.	Kitsa Papadopoulos / NDIA Secretariat	In progress

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