9 April 2024

This bulletin summarises the Participant Reference Group's (PRG) recent meeting. The PRG consists of 23 participant and carer representatives across Australia. The PRG is a key platform to ensure the participant voice is heard and understood by the National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA). Feedback from meetings is used to inform strategy, policy development, system and service delivery development and review, to support continuous improvement.

Chairperson's welcome

Debbie Irvine, NDIA Director of the Participant First Engagement Initiative and Donna Purcell from the Office of the Participant Advocate, welcomed members to the tenth PRG meeting for 2023. In this meeting we heard an update on resources to support participants and business teams in long term working groups. We also said goodbye to seven of our PRG members whose membership term was over.

Resources to support participants in long term working groups

In our November PRG meeting we asked members to suggest ways we can support participants and business teams when they join long-term working groups.

In this meeting we confirmed what we heard in November so we can plan improvements to our resources for 2024. We asked members to tell us if we had missed any suggestions, what resources we should make a priority, and if there were resources created outside of the NDIA that we could use.

We heard:

- The way the PRG is run should be used as an example of a group that works well.
- The NDIA needs a clear definition of what co-design means.
- We need to prioritise accountability statements for each long term group. It will help members understand what is expected from participants as well as NDIA staff in the meetings.
- Create videos to help new members understand what a good meeting looks like.
- Create a website for each long term group so members can access all the induction resources and meeting documents in one place. It can be hard to keep track of too many emails.
- Offer pre and post meeting follow ups to help members understand the meeting content.
- Have a direct contact number for NDIS staff to be able to ask questions, or for support.

- NDIA staff need to be trained about disability and trauma informed practice.
- NDIA staff need to recognise and acknowledge their own unconscious bias before working with participants.
- Staff need to have empathy and understanding so that trusting relationships can be formed within the long term group. This will make it easier to get better outcomes from everyone involved.
- Value what participants have to say on the topic. For true co-design, the NDIA should not come to the working group where the answer has already been decided and it is just a tick box exercise to get participants to agree. There should not be any preconceived ideas or assumptions about the outcomes of the work.
- Materials must be provided to participants in an accessible format a week before to give them time to review.
- It is important to know who else will be attending and what their role is.
- Develop specific resources and checklists for NDIA staff, so meetings can be run smoothly, and participants are comfortable speaking about issues if they arise.
- Induction meetings prior to starting working groups is important to supporting participants to feel comfortable with new working group.
- Look at using the Otter app to take meeting minutes, create transcripts and summarise the meeting.

Goodbye to PRG members

In this meeting we said goodbye to seven of our PRG members who have been part of the PRG for over 2 years. It is always sad to say goodbye, but we need to hear from new members to help us keep improving the NDIS for all participants.
Donna Purcell thanked all the departing members for their contributions over the last 2 years which has been deeply valued and appreciated. There are 7 new members joining the PRG in February 2024 and we look forward to welcoming them to the Group.

Final comments and close

Donna Purcell thanked all the PRG members for their input and advice during 2023. The Group has helped improve so many areas of the NDIA during the year.

Next meeting

In person for those that can travel to Sydney on Tuesday, 6 and Wednesday, 7 February 2024. Note this may change depending on availability. UPDATE 22 December 2023. We are currently exploring alternative dates and options and have asked members to reserve 21 to 22 Feb. Location to be advised.

Download the meeting summary in easy read

- Participant Reference Group Meeting Summary Easy Read – 13 December 2023 (PDF 917KB)

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