



Joint Standing Committee on the NDIS
PO Box 6100
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Honourable members of the Joint Standing Committee,

Re: Inquiry into NDIS Planning

The Disability Council NSW ("the Council"), is a statutory body made up of members of the disability community that advises the NSW Government on matters relating to government policy relating to the need to improve inclusion for people with disability. The Council would like to thank the Joint Standing Committee for inquiring into the issue of NDIS planning and giving the public an opportunity to provide input on this matter.

The Council submits the following concerns, comments and recommendation for the consideration of the Joint Standing Committee as it inquires into the issue of NDIS planning:

- **More guidance is needed in planning** – Many NDIS participants and their carers find the process of building plans to be quite daunting and at times confusing. Upon beginning to draft a plan, participants and carers are presented with a blank canvas of possibilities for their plan with little guidance provided as to how plans should be structured and what they should include. The Council strongly recommends that the NDIA provide participants and carers with a clear and comprehensive guide on how to write and build a plan. The Council also recommends that mock example plans be provided to people building their NDIS plans to provide with a template of how their plan should be structured and what it should include.
- **Access to draft plans** – The Council believes that NDIS participants and their carers should be able to access and view their draft plan prior to their finalisation. As the information on their draft plans is directly relevant to them and concerns their welfare as NDIS participants, it should be their right to be able to access them when they are in their draft stage.
- **More timely plan reviews** – The Council recommends that reviews of plans be carried out on a more timely basis. The Council has encountered too many reports of NDIS participants and their carers requiring a plan to be reviewed because of an emergency situation only to be held up by excessively slow reviews carried out by NDIS planners. Council members cite reports of participants and carers waiting between 10 and 15 days to receive a response

to emails from the planners carrying out their reviews. Such delays are unacceptable.

- **Variability in the quality of support provided by LACs** – The Council recommends that more consistency be provided in quality of services provided to NDIS participants and carers by Local Area Coordination (LAC) services. NDIS participants and carers have reported to the Council that the quality of the support and services provided by different LACs in different locations across the state is highly variable. Some participants are very happy with the quality of the support they are given while other report far more negative experiences with their own LACs who they have found to be sometimes lacking in care and competency. In some cases, reports have come to the Council stating the participants find that their LAC is more of a hindrance to their access to the NDIS than a help. This has to change as all NDIS participants should be able to receive the highest standard of care and competency from the LACs staff that they interact with, regardless of their location within NSW.
- **Provision of training for self-management** – The Council recommends that more training be provided to NDIS participants and carers who wish to self-manage their plans. Self-management is an attractive option to many given the flexibility and control it can give them in managing their NDIS plans, however, many find that unfamiliarity with its processes and complexities are a barrier to taking up the option of self-management. Training could diminish this obstacle. This training could take the form of a TAFE course that participants and carers could access that could then also be used as a qualification when they apply for employment.
- **Better funding consistency from year to year** – The Council recommends that the NDIA take better care to ensure that there is more consistency in the funding levels received by NDIS participants through their plans from year to year. The Council has received reports from participants who are deaf, deaf-blind and hard of hearing that they are often provided with generous funding levels in the first year of the NDIS participation, but upon the second year, their funding levels are substantially decreased. This highly negatively affects the ability of these participants to take part in the communities as well as providing them with additional financial uncertainty as they attempt to plan their finances for the years ahead.
- **Onerous demands to justify services required** – The Council recommends that the NDIA seek to reduce the unnecessary burdens that it often places on NDIS participants and carers who seek to justify the funding they need for the supports required for their disability. There are reports of NDIS participants providing medical evidence of their disabilities and conditions but then being denied standard care supports for these disabilities. For example, one deaf participant suffers from vertigo and bad balance which is common amongst deaf people. This participant found physiology helped her to maintain control and cope with her bodily imbalance. She had already provided medical evidence of her hearing and balance issues yet the NDIA found this to be insufficient and required her to get another report from an ENT Specialist to specifically state that physiology can assist with her balance issues caused by her deafness. In addition to this, they had asked to seek alternative costs that are cheaper and more effective than physiology. Such onerous requirements

for evidence are unnecessary and cause undue stress and administrative burdens on NDIS participants.

The Council thanks you once again for giving us the opportunity to comment on such an important issue that affects the lives of NDIS participants and their carers.

Yours sincerely,

Mark Tonga

Chair

Disability Council NSW