20 June 2024

The Autism Advisory Group (AAG) met online on 16 April 2024 for their second meeting this year.

The Chairperson, Ms Rebecca Falkingham, CEO National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA), welcomed Jacqui Borland as a new AAG member from the Australian Advisory Board on Autism Spectrum Disorder and acknowledged the contributions of departing member, Pam Macrossan.

Focus of the meeting

The meeting covered:

- Implementing the National Guideline on Assessment and Diagnosis of Autism.
- Update on the National Autism Strategy.
- Update on NDIS Amendment (Getting the NDIS Back on Track) Bill (the Bill).

National Guideline on Assessment and Diagnosis of Autism

AAG members (members) talked about a proposed co-design approach to implementing the new National Guidelines (the Guidelines) into NDIA practices and processes.

The Guidelines are:

- National Guideline for the Assessment and Diagnosis of Autism in Australia
- National Guideline for supporting the learning, participation and wellbeing of autistic children and their families in Australia

Members also talked about how AAG members with expertise and lived experience could take part in current and future proposed NDIA co-design scheme reform items.

Members emphasised the importance:

- For the NDIA to continue to engage with AAG on this work to ensure people with Autism have input to any changes.
- For the NDIA to consider how and when information is shared with the community.
- To understand the work individual organisations are undertaking on the Guidelines.
- To understand the information and expertise others can provide to AAG and Agency.
- To ensure there are links across all co-design pieces of work.

The implementation of the Guidelines within the NDIA will be a standing item for AAG agenda.

National Autism Strategy

The Department of Social Services (DSS) provided an overview of the National Autism Strategy (the Strategy). The Strategy addresses the barriers and disadvantages faced by Autistic people.

The Strategy's key vision is for a safe and inclusive society where Autistic people can fully take part in all aspects of life, in line with international human rights.

DSS has begun on an implementation plan. People can comment on the draft Strategy until 31 May 2024.

You can find out more about the Strategy on the DSS website.

Members said it was important the Strategy includes everyone and leaves no one behind. AAG are keen to continue to get updates from DSS as the Strategy and implementation plans are finalised.

NDIS Amendment (Getting the NDIS Back on Track) Bill (the Bill)

The group discussed the proposed Bill before the Parliament. The NDIA will continue to work with groups such as AAG to understand the concerns of people with disability and how we can best explain the changes in the proposed legislation.

Members shared

- They felt they had a better understanding of the legislative changes and process.
- There needs to be consistent clear language used by NDIA and DSS. This will help reduce confusion and anxiety.
- They are keen to be involved and to continue to understand the process.

AAG Next Meeting

The AAG's next meeting is on 18 June 2024.

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