8 November 2024

Key Themes and Insights

Agenda item 1: DRCO 2024 workplan discussion

- Key Themes: DRCO 2024 workplan; DRCO Forum working group updates.
- Key Insights:
  - The Membership working group developed and shared a process for DRCOs to raise issues for consideration at the Forum.
  - The Accessible Communications working group is working with the NDIA on a pilot project for developing accessible communications for people with intellectual disability. The pilot will provide a model for the Agency to develop accessible communications for other disability communities.
  - The Employment working group has held its first meeting. It identified focus areas of:
    - customised employment
    - work experience, and
    - self-employment and micro enterprises

Agenda item 2: Service Delivery update

- Key Themes: Processes to reduce participant wait times; Service Delivery staff capability uplift; terminal illness pathway; specialist support trial for participants with young onset dementia.
- Key Insights:
  - Over the past 9 months the NDIA has experienced higher demand for service than anticipated due to a range of reason including:
    - uncertainty around the NDIS Review,
    - legislation changes, and
    - cost of living pressures.
  - The Agency is prioritising reducing wait time and backlogs and has employed more staff to support this work. Since June 2024 the NDIA has onboarded 535 employees in Service Delivery teams.
  - The Agency is running a roles and responsibilities education campaign for plan managers and support coordinators. This includes a focus on when to seek change of circumstances plan reviews for participants.
  - The Agency has established a terminal illness pathway to support participants impacted by terminal illness, or requiring palliative care, to quickly access the NDIS.
  - The Agency is currently running a trial to better support participants with young onset dementia through specialised planners and specialised support coordinators.

Agenda item 3: Plan intermediary reform

- Key Themes: Plan management continuous improvement; navigator design and transition; blended payments trial.
- Key Insights:
  - The NDIA is implementing measures to improve the consistency and quality of support provided by plan managers, including:
    - implementing the PACE system
    - developing guidance for participants and providers on what to expect from a plan manager or provider
    - updating plan manager guidance and training to strengthen participant safeguarding and help detect fraud.
    - transitioning to a fully electronic payment system
    - investing in digital infrastructure.
  - The Agency is engaging participants through a series of focus groups and consultation sessions to inform the continuous improvement of plan management services. Any reforms will be informed by consultation with participants, plan management providers and the disability community.
  - Based on recommendation of the NDIS Review, the Agency has established a project to design and implement support for people to navigate the disability ecosystem. The project will:
    - improve the participant experience with the NDIS and ability to connect with all supports and services available
    - help contribute to the Scheme's sustainability
    - deliver smooth transition from support coordinators and plan managers to navigators.
  - The new navigator function will be co-designed with participants and their supporters. The NDIA is in the process of establishing a co-design group focused on this topic.
  - States and territories will also be involved in the design of the navigation function.
  - The NDIA and Department of Social Services (DSS) are running an initiative to co-design and test new payment models with the disability community. The trial of alternative payment methods focusses on:
    - school leaver employment support program
    - participants accessing independent living support, and
    - participants who are younger people and residential aged care.

Agenda item 4: NDIS Legislation

- Key Themes: Section 10 NDIS Support Lists; legislative change management and communications planning.

- Key Insights:
  - The NDIA and DSS are currently reviewing all feedback and submissions received about the Section 10 NDIS support lists.
  - The Agency is seeking disability community input into the implementation of the Section 10 NDIS support lists following the commencement of legislation, including the development of the substitution process.
  - The Agency is seeking disability community input into the communication plan for educating participants and the wider disability community about the legislative changes and their impact. The Agency will take an education approach to support participants understand the changes.
  - The NDIA National Contact Centre will be briefed to provide support to participants about the changes. Accessible options such as web chat and email will be available to the Deaf community to access support.
  - The Agency will use paid advertising to target hard to reach communities including culturally and linguistically diverse people.

Agenda item 5: NDIA advisory, reference and co-design groups

- Key Themes: Scheme Reform program, overview of NDIA advisory, reference and co-design groups.
- Key Insights:
  - The Scheme Reform program includes:
    - the continuation of work already started through the Reforms for Outcomes program
    - actions arising from the NDIS Review government response
    - the design and implementation of legislative changes.
  - The Agency is establishing co-design working groups focussed on different reform initiatives. DRCOs were asked to nominate to participate in co-design working groups.
  - An implementation steering committee that includes DRCO and NDIA co-design working group co-chairs has oversight responsibility for the co-design working group reform activities.
  - The Agency will continue to hold quarterly forums focused on the reform program, attended by DRCOs and Independent Advisory Council (IAC) members.
  - NDIA advisory and reference groups have a broader scope than the reform program and provide advice to the Agency on their particular focus area. Advisory and reference groups will provide advice and input into the reform program where appropriate.
  - Based on DRCO Forum feedback, the Agency is also in the process of establishing three new advisory and reference groups:
    - Rural and remote advisory group
    - Self-management advisory group

- Supported decision-making advisory group.

Attendees

A4 Autism Aspergers Advocacy Australia, Australian Autism Alliance, Australian Federation of Disability Organisations, Autistic Self Advocacy Network of Australia and New Zealand, Blind Citizens Australia, Carers Australia, Children and Young People with Disability Australia, Community Mental Health Australia, Deaf Australia, Deafblind Australia, Deafness Forum Australia, Disability Advocacy Network Australia, Down Syndrome Australia, Every Australian Counts, 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, ReImagine Australia, Self Advocacy Resource Unit, Women with Disabilities Australia, Young People in Nursing Homes National Alliance

Apologies: Brain Injury Australia

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