Media release from the Minister - Series of firsts in new NDIA Board appointments

31 March 2023

Minister for the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) Bill Shorten today announced the appointment of two new members of the National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA) Board, including a First Nations appointee.

The new Board members are Ms Joan McKenna Kerr from Western Australia and Dr Richard Fejo from the Northern Territory.

In addition to his other qualifications and skills, Dr Fejo is a person with a disability, taking the number of people with a disability on the board to six out of 12 – the highest representation in the agency's history.

Minister Shorten said the Board appointments were made in close consultation, and with unanimous supports, with state and territory Disability Ministers, ensuring the nominees met the requisite skills, experience and knowledge.

"I congratulate both of the new appointees who are passionate and long-standing advocates of people with disability, and their families and carers," Mr Shorten said.

"I am particularly proud this Government has appointed a First Nations representative to the NDIA Board.

"It's also the first time the NDIA Board has had representation from the Northern Territory and we are addressing the rarity of WA representation."

Ms McKenna Kerr is currently Chief Executive of the Autism Association of Western Australia and has devoted more than 25 years working in the disability sector.

She was a member of the NDIS Independent Advisory Council and was a member of the Commonwealth NDIS Advisory Group reporting to the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) Select Council of Ministers and Treasurers.

Ms McKenna Kerr has been a Board Director of National Disability Services (NDS) and Chair of its WA Division. She iwasalso a Director of the Australian Advisory Board on Autism Spectrum Disorders.

A Larrakia man from the Northern Territory who lives with a disability, Dr Fejo holds an Honorary Doctorate from Flinders University.

Dr Fejo currently serves as the Chair of the Darwin Waterfront Corporation and Chair of the Australia Day Council NT.

He is Senior Elder at Flinders University and sits on the International Relations Committee for the City of Darwin.

Previously Dr Fejo worked as Senior Cross Cultural Educator with the Northern Territory General Practice and was co-chair of the Australian National Cultural Educatory/Cultural Mentor Network.

“I am excited about what the two new members will bring to the Board, with their wide experience, skills and enthusiasm advocating for improvements for all Australians with disability,” Minister Shorten said.

The new appointees will replace Mr Glenn Keys AO whose term recently concluded and Professor Jane Burns whose term will finish shortly.

“On behalf of the Government, I thank Professor Burns amd Mr Keys AO very much for their contribution to the NDIA Board over the past nine years and three years respectively,” Minister Shorten said.

NDIA Chair Kurt Fearnley said: “I look forward to the new appointees bringing their wealth of experience to an increasingly diverse board.”

The new Board members will serve a term of three years.

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