



Sector Communique – August 2017

National Mental Health Sector Reference Group

The National Mental Health Sector Reference Group provides expert advice from the mental health sector to the NDIA about mental health and the NDIS.

People with lived experience | Family and carers | Mental Health Commissions | NDIA Independent Advisory Council | Commonwealth Departments of Social Services and Health | Mental Health Australia | Mental Health Drug and Alcohol Principal Committee | Scheme Actuary | NDIA Mental Health Section | NDIA Strategic Adviser

The NDIS gives effect to Australia's obligations under the [United Nations Convention on the rights of People with Disabilities \(2006\)](#).

The National Mental Health Sector Reference Group (NMHSRG) was established by the NDIA in 2014 to build a strong working relationship between the mental health sector and the NDIA.

For the [terms of reference](#) & previous [sector communiques](#) visit the NDIS website.

Members' Reports

- Chair thanked outgoing members and welcomed the new members.
- There have been changes to the [NDIA Independent Advisory Council](#). NMHSRG members Janet Meagher and Gerry Naughtin remain members.
- The IAC document "The First Four Years: 2013-17" was shared at the meeting and outlines a range of key mental health reports and resources members have produced.
- Members from the National Register of Mental Health Consumers and Carers emphasised it is important for the NDIA to communicate clearly with people with a psychosocial disability who want to join the NDIS about eligibility criteria, so that those in need don't miss out.

Key Updates

- There is a new resource to help people with a psychosocial disability to apply to join the NDIS: <http://reimagine.today/>
 - The NDIA are working with peak mental health organisations to run workshops with providers about pricing.
 - There is now a specialist Mental Health Access Team (MHAT) within NDIA.
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- The [Independent Advisory Council \(IAC\)](#) provided evidence to the Joint Standing Committee, and so did Stephanie Gunn, Eddie Bartnik, and Deborah Roberts from the NDIA.
 - The Mental Health Drug and Alcohol Principal Committee noted the [Fifth National Mental Health Plan](#) was on the COAG meeting agenda to be endorsed on the 4th of August.
 - Mr Frkovic, on behalf of the Mental Health Commissions, reported that there is an issue around the variability in NDIS plans and there is a need for better consistency across all states/territories. He also noted that there is some instability in the non-government sector, as the Commonwealth and States/Territories adjust funding for programs.
 - Community Mental Health Australia (CMHA) has made good progress on the [National NDIS](#)

[Mental Health conference](#) to be held in Sydney in November, the organising committee are currently seeking event sponsors.

- The Department of Health confirmed that the Partners in Recovery and Day to Day Living programs have had their contracts extended until 30th June 2019, to ensure service continuity during the transition period. Providers are able to take on new clients if there is capacity.
- The Department of Social Services noted that Personal Helpers and Mentors (PHaMs) and Mental Health Respite Carer Support have had their contracts extended until 30th June 2019, and are able to take on new clients if there is capacity.
- A number of projects are already underway by DSS in the workforce space, including: the Disability Innovation Network, Carecareers, ProjectABLE, Boosting the Local Care Workforce & the Innovative Workforce Fund.

Resources to access the NDIS

- The NDIA funded the Mental Health Coordinating Council (NSW) to create a resource to help people with psychosocial disability, their families and carers, and providers, to understand how the NDIS can assist them, how to apply, and how to get ready.
- The project has been completed and there is a live website: <http://reimagine.today/> and a workbook available for free. Members considered that the workbook would be a good resource for planners and LAC partners.
- The project was completed in collaboration with a group of people with lived experience.

WA Psychiatric Hostels Project

- Ms Kerry Stopher shared information about a project the NDIA Trial Site in the Perth Hills has completed.
- This project focused on providing supported access to the NDIS for people living in

The next meeting of the National Mental Health Sector Reference Group is expected to take place in November 2017.

Future topics are planned to include Information, Linkages and Capacity Building, Local Area Coordination, workforce and peer support, self management, and hard to reach populations.

psychiatric hostels, with the project reaching approximately 120 people.

- The project included a Steering Group of stakeholders for the project, engaged a specific project officer/planner, provided one-on-one pre-planning sessions, and created a streamlined planning pathway for these participants to build their trust and confidence.
- Plan implementation strategies included peer support meetings with a facilitator to understand what was working and what wasn't working for a variety of hostel residents.

Scheme Actuary's Update

- Ms Sarah Johnson, Scheme Actuary presented the report: *People with Psychosocial Disability and the NDIS – as at March 2017*.
- See below highlighted text box
- A key summary of data for *People with Psychosocial Disability and the NDIS – as at 31 March 2017* is included at [Attachment A](#).

Scheme Actuary Update

11,257 (11.4%) of all scheme participants have a psychosocial disability, and 6,371 participants (6.4%) have psychosocial disability recorded as their primary disability (as at 31st March 2017).

Mental Health Work Plan update

- The NDIA has listened to the sector's concerns and has set up an Independent Pricing Review, as well as a specific workshop on Pricing for Psychosocial Disability Supports. For details, please contact: MENTAL.HEALTH.TEAM@ndis.gov.au
- As outlined in the NDIA submission to the JSC there five areas the NDIA Mental Health team are focusing on:
 - Making it easier to understand access requirements
 - Helping existing and potentially new participants to understand their NDIS pathway
 - Building NDIA staff understanding of mental health and psychosocial disability
 - Explaining the types of supports needed and how these are best integrated
 - Finalising a Functional Assessment tool for psychosocial disability
- There is work in the NDIA, focused on language being welcoming, and supportive to people with a mental health condition asking to join the NDIS. For more information: <https://www.ndis.gov.au/psychosocial/products.html>