



National Ethnic Disability Alliance & National Disability and Carer Alliance

Ensuring People from NESB and CALD Backgrounds have Equitable Access to the NDIS

March 2013

The following is the feedback drawn up from the National Ethnic Disability Alliance and National Disability and Carer Alliance Roundtable held at Parliament House Canberra on 12 March 2013. The roundtable was focussed on ensuring that people from non-English speaking backgrounds (NESB) and/or culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds (CALD) have equitable access to the National Disability Insurance Scheme.

The National Ethnic Disability Alliance (NEDA) is the national peak organisation representing the rights and interests of people from non-English speaking background (NESB) with disability, their families and carers throughout Australia. The National Disability and Carer Alliance (NDCA) was formed in 2009 by the Australian Federation of Disability Organisations, Carers Australia and National Disability Services to pursue the structural and systemic changes necessary to transform the lives of people with a disability, their families and carers in this country.

The recommendations and position statements below are outcomes of the roundtable and should not be construed as formal policy position statements of the organising organisations or forum participants.

1. Culturally Appropriate Information and Recognition of Diversity

There are cultural challenges around the move to the NDIS and how we communicate in a culturally appropriate way in different communities. Disability is stigmatised in a variety of cultures. Migrants and refugees are often encouraged to seek employment in rural and remote areas. Getting information to these communities requires rethinking traditional information delivery techniques.

Statistic information on birth place is not necessarily reflective of a person's cultural identity. It is important to acknowledge that within the same language groups, there are various dialects and different ethnic or religious groups that have different cultures.

Information needs to be provided in community languages and in Easy English to community centres, cultural spaces, Centrelink, ethnic media and through social networking for young people. In many instances what is required is somebody to go and talk directly with families.

For people from culturally linguistically and diverse backgrounds: at the front-end of the NDIS you require information about how to engage with the scheme, then information on how to use the scheme effectively and then ensuring people can engage in the review of the scheme. Language specific focus groups must be held in areas of high concentration of CALD communities to raise awareness of the scheme.

2. Eligibility and Residency Requirements

We believe that in accordance with the UNCRPD that NDIS eligibility criteria should be extended to include skilled migrant visa holders and bridging visa holders. It is going to save Australia money in the long run if we provide all people with a disability with the appropriate supports and services. If people are allowed to languish over a period of time, their circumstances will become worse and the costs to the community will escalate.

We consider "the ten-year rule" for eligibility for residents to access the NDIS as a matter that requires urgent review. Similarly, New Zealand citizens should be able access to the NDIS.

With NDIS, there will be early intervention but what will happen to families and parents who are waiting for a permanent visa and therefore are not eligible for early intervention for their children?

There is potential for bilateral agreements between countries with disability support systems, that are signatories to the UNCRPD.

3. Culturally Appropriate and Competent Service Provision

Diversity and Cultural Sensitivity Training is required for NDIS assessment and support services to address the complex needs of people with a disability from NESB/CALD backgrounds and to provide equity of access to services.

This training should be a two way process. People with a disability, family and carers have a role educating service providers. People with a disability, family and carers also need empowerment and advocacy training. A registered agency for training in cultural diversity should be established.

There is an important division between language and culture. Up until recently, a lot of effort has focused on translating documents into different languages. The NDIS needs a more sophisticated approach that examines the level of diversity and considers how to convey key messages. Sensitivity is needed to better understand what a person's life consists of; people have a range of needs, religious and cultural needs based on personal life experiences. We need to ask the right questions.

4. Participation of NESB/CALD Groups in Decision Making.

A holistic approach is required to the engagement of people from NESB/CALD backgrounds to ensure services become more culturally responsive and enhance the autonomy and self-determination of decision-making of people from NESB/CALD backgrounds with disabilities.

Often to support people to make decisions, they will need first to be empowered. Some people with a disability have always struggled with day-to-day issues and do not yet have long-term aspirations (in this respect, people with a disability who have achieved can become very powerful role models for the community).

The NDIA should employ people with disability from culturally diverse backgrounds. The selection of the NDIS Advisory Council should include consideration of cultural diversity.

5. Advocacy for Individuals from NESB/CALD Communities and the NDIS

Advocacy needs to be supported by the NDIS at the individual, community and systemic levels. People with disabilities should have choice in relation to their advocacy provider in the same way that they will have choice in relation to services. A lot of work is required in understanding how we support people from different cultural backgrounds in supported decision-making process. The NDIS also needs to support advocacy at the community and systemic levels, to assist the community and the system to improve over time and in particular enhance the intersection between NDIS and other areas of activities (such as health, education, justice).

Attachment: Forum Participants

The Hon Jenny Macklin MP, Minister for Families, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs, Minister for Disability Reform addressed the forum.

Senator Dean Smith, Liberal Party of Australia, addressed the forum.

Participants:

Professor Ron McCallum

Professor Mary Crock

National Ethnic Disability Alliance: Suresh Rajan (President), Dwayne Cranfield (CEO), Christine Williams (Vice President), Sajini Sumar (Treasurer), Juan de la Torre (Council Member), Gustav Gebels (Associate Member), Norhawa Bee Mohamed Ismail (Research and Policy Officer), Brian Cooper (NEDA Epidemiologist), Madhu Dasgupta (NEDA Council Member)

National Disability & Carer Alliance: Roland Naufal (Manager)

Australian Federation of Disability Organisations (AFDO): Lesley Hall (CEO), Leah Hobson (Policy Officer NDIS), Sven Topp.

Carers Australia: Anna Morison (ACT), Sue Elderton (ACT), Victoria Toulkidis (ACT), Helen Malcomess (ACT), Yvonne Donnan (QLD) & Simona Mardin North (QLD)

Andrea Simmons (DANA)

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