

**DISABILITY REFORM MINISTERS' MEETING
TELEPRESENCE – 4 DECEMBER 2020**

COMMUNIQUÉ

Commonwealth, state and territory disability ministers met on Friday by telepresence. Ministers noted that on 23 October 2020 National Cabinet agreed to accept the final report on the Review of Council of Australian Governments (COAG) Councils and Ministerial Forums.

Ministers discussed the implications for Disability Reform Ministers' meetings, which will be ongoing and meet four times each year, with a focus on key priorities. Ministers agreed to three broad priority workstreams for their workplan over the next 12 months:

- The National Disability Strategy;
- NDIS system reform and mainstream interfaces; and
- Scheme Performance.

Ministers also discussed lessons learnt from the Victorian COVID-19 experience, including the importance of joint governance through the Victorian Disability Response Centre in supporting preparedness, prevention and outbreak management. Ministers noted disability ministers first met on 18 March 2020, and have gathered four times throughout the pandemic. Ministers discussed the implementation of a range of temporary measures from 21 March 2020 to support NDIS participants and providers. Ministers were pleased to note the collaboration between governments at all levels, providers and the disability sectors and people with disability and their carers. Ministers reaffirmed their commitment to supporting participants and agreed to continue to identify and strengthen systems and processes for at-risk and vulnerable NDIS participants, whilst being agile in responding to community outbreaks that may occur in the future.

Ministers discussed critical work to strengthen the support and protections for people with disability who may be at risk of harm, including a 'no wrong door' approach to identifying vulnerability. Ministers agreed to further work by all Australian governments to strengthen outreach and oversight under the NDIS and other relevant systems, and state and territory guardianship arrangements.

Ministers noted further information released by the Australian Government and the National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA) on future reforms to the scheme, including independent assessments to support NDIS access and planning decisions that will be rolled out from mid to late 2021 to allow for the learnings of the second stage of pilots to be incorporated into implementation activities. State and Territory Ministers raised the need to ensure detailed consultation is undertaken on the roll out of independent assessments with people with disability, their carers and the wider sector. The consultation papers are available on the NDIS website: <https://www.ndis.gov.au/community/have-your-say>.

Ministers also noted that in 2021 the Australian Government will release for consultation draft legislation and other NDIS Rules to give effect to the reforms, ahead of introduction to Parliament, with a view to it coming into effect by mid-2021. This will include the Australian Government's commitment to bring the NDIS Participant Service Guarantee into law. For further more information on the NDIS reforms, visit <https://www.dss.gov.au/disability-and-carers-programs-services-for-people-with-disability-national-disability-insurance-scheme/ndis-legislative-reforms>.

Ministers discussed the information provided by the Australian Government on proposed legislative changes and Operational Guidelines to make it clearer for participants to understand what is appropriately paid for with NDIS funds. Ministers noted the importance of further consultation between governments and people with disability and the disability sector before implementation in 2021.

Ministers committed to finalising a new National Disability Strategy (NDS) in 2021, and released the joint *Statement of Continued Commitment: National Disability Strategy 2010-2020* to cover the period between the expiry of the current NDS and the completion of the new NDS, highlighting governments' continued efforts to uphold the rights of people with disability.

Ministers also noted early feedback from stage two of public consultations on the [National Disability Strategy](#). Thousands of people with disability have contributed their views throughout the two stages of NDS engagement, and around 250 submissions have been provided in response to the NDS Position Paper.

A key message from the NDS consultations has been the need for all governments to better engage people with disability in the implementation and monitoring of the NDS. In response to this message, ministers agreed to establish an NDS Advisory Council (the Council) to advise ministers on the new NDS. The Council will be designed in collaboration with people with disability and the disability community, to commence when the new NDS commences in 2021. More information on the NDS Advisory Council will be available on the Department of Social Services website.

A key source of information for all governments to measure and drive better outcomes for people with disability will be the data available through the new National Disability Data Asset. Ministers agreed all jurisdictions will identify the priority data domains that could be included in an enduring Asset, for consideration in the first half of 2021.

Ministers will meet again in early 2021.