

COVID-19 and the particular risks for people with disability – Roundtable

10 NOVEMBER 2020

Minutes and Actions Arising

The Chair opened the eighth meeting of the Roundtable and invited people with lived experience and carers to discuss their experiences during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Deputy Chief Medical Officer for Mental Health, Dr Ruth Vine, gave an update on the mental health impacts resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Australian Government, state and territory representatives provided an update on the COVID-19 response across the country.

Issues discussed:

- Local business need to make sure their COVID-safe arrangements are communicated in a way that is consistent and accessible. This is particularly important for:
 - the deaf community
 - people with intellectual disability
 - the blind and low vision communities.
- Continued concerns about disability workforce shortages.
- The continued development and implementation of pandemic guidelines and scenario testing for group homes and residential care facilities.
- Concerns about people with disability who:
 - are experiencing isolation and skill loss due to lockdown and disrupted work, study, or schooling arrangements;
 - have less employment opportunities and lower job retention;
 - need re-training and additional therapies to assist with mobility, and transport safety;
 - are uncertain about using public transport and have travel concerns for when borders re-open.
- Concerns about the impact of COVID-19 on mental health of persons living with disability, particularly children and young people.

Key actions:

- The Department of Health will ask Victorian representatives for more information about changes to guidance for people in residential care, as lockdown restrictions ease.
- The Department of Health will invite the Department of Social Services (DSS) to provide information about Disability Employment Services during COVID-19 and the post-lockdown environment, at a future meeting.
- The Department of Health will invite education departments to future meetings to continue to discuss
 - the longer-term impacts of the COVID-19 disruption to schooling
 - recovery efforts to assist students.
- The Victorian Department of Health and Human Services will follow up on hospital requirements for use of personal protective equipment by families and those who support people with disability, particularly in Intensive Care Units.
- The Department of Health will seek advice from the Department of Infrastructure and Transport about guidance on COVID-safe interstate travel as borders reopen.
- The NDIA will follow up internally and provide advice about:
 - block funding changes
 - impacts for the deaf community on accessibility of, and out-of-pocket expenses for, Auslan interpreters.