

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

16 June 2020

### Minutes and Actions Arising

The Chair opened the third meeting of the Roundtable and invited discussion of lived experience during the COVID-19 pandemic.

#### Issues raised:

- Concern over appropriate use of PPE equipment and how to take preferences into account while making informed decisions.
  - Cwth and VIC are developing videos on appropriate use of PPE and guidance for use in disability settings.
- Accessibility of testing (at home - including group homes, at testing centres)
- The need for decision-making support tools for families around return to school and the easing of restrictions across jurisdictions.
- The potential for disability care workforce shortages to emerge with changes in temporary worker visas and closed borders.
- Concern over access to care with closed borders preventing timely and appropriate healthcare in some instances.
- Continuing concern about safe management of public transport and disability-specific transport.
- Continuing data collection challenges in disease surveillance system.
- The need for continuing diabetes and other chronic disease management to be maintained during the COVID-19 period. The COVID-19 Hospital Companion may be useful for this, with information on existing medications during hospital treatments.
- Transition issues for young adults finishing school, noting work experience opportunities had been disrupted during COVID-19, with potential longer-term impacts.
- *People with Disability Australia* has completed a survey with over 200 respondents including carers and families. Key findings include increasing expenses, decreasing NDIS support and a general support for telehealth.
- Support for telehealth to continue, with some concerns over privacy when using telehealth in group homes and people retaining the right to choose face to face. Concerns also about disparity in access across geographic locations and economic situations. Would like to see a quality service supported.
- The need for pandemic policies for group homes.
- Concerns about the long term impact on students with disability in tertiary education. *Children and Young People with Disability Australia* did a survey with 740 responses. They are working with the University of NSW and will release results in July 2020.
- NDIS Quality and Safeguards Commission are working on a brochure for providers on preventing outbreaks.

- Staff in hospitals and healthcare facilities need to be aware of the role of carers. The Australian Human Right Commission has developed guidelines for health care settings on appropriate care during a pandemic, including ensuring “reasonable accommodation”. These are currently being reviewed and will be available for use.
- The Department of Health undertook to explore whether there was existing material to support people in considering and developing Advance Care Directives where appropriate. The sensitivities associated with this issue were noted.
- The Department of Health’s disability medical adviser updated the group on rehabilitation and issues that can arise as a result of COVID-19 treatments.

#### **Actions:**

- The Department to circulate the transcript for the PPE video from the Chief Nurse and will send the video link once published.
- Survey undertaken by *People with Disability Australia* to be sent to committee members.
- The Department of Health will speak with DSS around work experience and safety.
- The Department will examine the COVID-19 Hospital Companion in regards to use outside the pandemic.
- A brief update on telehealth initiatives will be provided at the 14 July Meeting.
- The Cwth Department of Health to meet with *National Ethnic Disability Alliance (NEDA)* to discuss communication strategies.
- DSS will circulate statistics on the Disability Information helpline.
- An update on worker shortages will be discussed at the 14 July meeting.
- The Department will circulate State and Territory transport advice to Roundtable participants.
- NDIA to give an update on policies for support workers in the hospital setting and policies being updated and reviewed at the 14 July meeting.
- DSS will provide an update on the National Workforce Plan at the 14 July meeting.
- The Department will discuss the impact on students with a disability at tertiary education with DESE.
- The Department will circulate the Back to School Toolkit once the design is complete.
- The NDIS will review documents in regards to wording of ‘non-direct care’.
- The Department will seek advice from its palliative care team in regards to Advanced Care Directives.
- Briefing to be provided at 14 July meeting on Communicable Disease Network Australia (CDNA) public health developments.