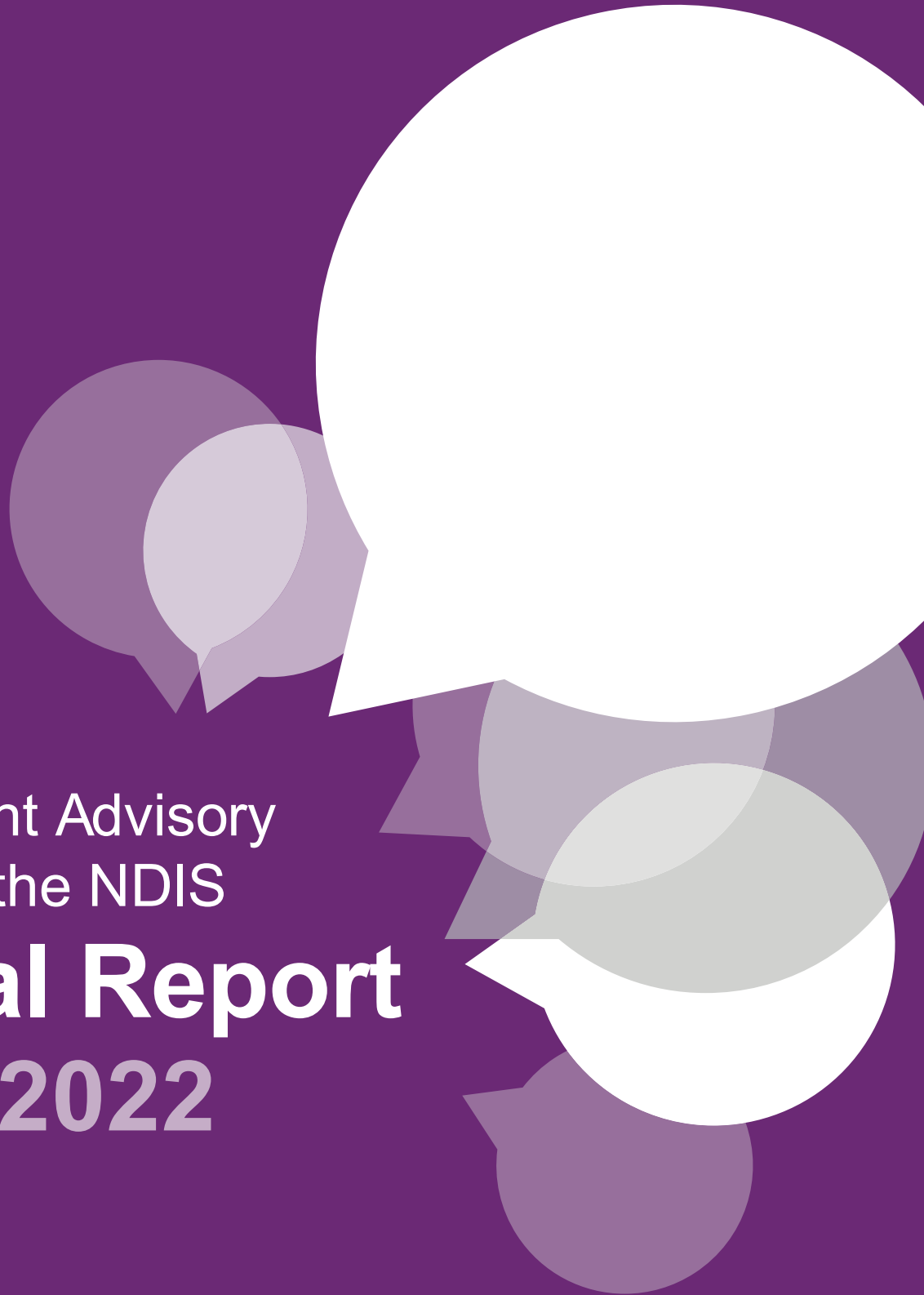




Independent  
Advisory  
Council  
to the **ndis**

Independent Advisory  
Council to the NDIS

# Annual Report 2021–2022



# Contents

<b>Principal Member’s review</b>	<b>04</b>
<b>Our important advisory role</b>	<b>08</b>
Council Members	09
<b>Reference Groups</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>Our priorities</b>	<b>20</b>
Our Operating Model	20
Our 2021-22 Work Plan	21
<b>Member view: Jointly helping participants be in control of their lives</b>	<b>23</b>
<b>Promoting our work</b>	<b>24</b>
<b>Year in review</b>	<b>25</b>
<b>Advice to the NDIA Board and input and expertise</b>	<b>27</b>
Advice to the NDIA Board	28
Input and expertise	30
<b>Co-design: An important path for positive change</b>	<b>31</b>

## Acknowledgement

The Independent Advisory Council (Council) to the NDIS acknowledges and pays respects to fellow Australians with disability—and we reconfirm our commitment to the mission of the NDIS to contribute to a just and inclusive Australia where all can reach their full potential and contribution.

Council also acknowledges the Traditional Owners and Custodians of the country throughout Australia, and their continuing connection to land, sea, and community. We pay our respects to their Elders, past, present, and emerging.

# Principal Member's review



**As Principal Member of the Independent Advisory Council (Council) to the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS), it is my pleasure to present Council's 2021-22 Annual Report. This report highlights the important work and achievements of Council and its Reference Groups from 1 July 2021 to 30 June 2022.**

Above: Photo of Ms Leah van Poppel, Principal Member of the Independent Advisory Council to the NDIS and National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA) Board Member.

Council, its dedicated Members and four Reference Groups have worked tirelessly to represent the voice of people with disability in their communities and networks. Our Members have all shown a tremendous commitment to their roles and responsibilities. Both to shine a light on NDIS challenges and opportunities, and to deliver independent advice to the [Board of the National Disability Insurance Agency \(NDIA\)](#).

Our Members have worked through Council's ambitious [2021-22 Work Plan](#) and responded to the changeable nature of our advice and priorities. We have also looked to [Council's Operating Model](#) to keep our advice process on track.

When shaping this year's priority work for the Board, Council decided that our advice development called for more thoroughness, collaboration, and consultation with the disability community. We have ensured that our advice development used wide-ranging consultation that focused on inclusion, accessibility, and diversity.

We have taken our time to carefully and respectfully consult with the disability community to develop our advice for the Board. This approach aims to represent the voice of the disability community and to apply intersectional thinking to our advice. We have done this to ensure that Council's recommendations are impactful, understood, and implemented by the NDIA.

We look forward to further developing and refining our 2021-22 advice reports, before they are submitted to the Board later in 2022. The themes of work we considered as part of our advice development are more important than ever. They focus on recommendations that aim to improve the NDIS in three critical areas including:

- equity in the NDIS
- positive behaviour supports
- participants who are ageing.

When I reflect on our advice development this year, I must highlight the enduring impact of Council's advice to the NDIA Board on Scheme reforms. I am proud of Council's consultation with the NDIA to deliver the advice, '[Strengthening Scheme reforms to access and planning](#)' (DOCX, 159kB).

The Scheme reform advice, delivered to Board in July 2021, is an important body of work. It has enabled innovation on some of the most important NDIS issues. It has forged a path for co-design in the NDIA, which Council is proud to contribute to alongside the disability community.

Council has also delivered a breadth of advice direct to NDIA business areas, through additional input and expertise. A standout example of this was Council's work to develop guides for understanding supports. As part of this work, Council provided feedback on several participant support guides. These included guides for employment, autism, specialist disability accommodation (SDA), and others.

Council also made a significant contribution to give input to the NDIA's work to amend the NDIS Act. This work has allowed for participant plan variation without a plan reassessment.

This year we have responded to an unprecedented number of requests for Council's input and expertise, as NDIA business areas and external stakeholders look to Council for feedback to improve NDIS policies, systems, and service projects.

The volume of work and requests for Council's input tells me that understanding of Council's role and value-add in the NDIA is at an all-time high. This has been helped by successful awareness campaigns, guided by Council's Communications Strategy, that promote Council.

We considered Council's advice against the backdrop of the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. This work reinforced Council's commitment to ensuring participants continued to receive essential supports.

As mentioned earlier, engagement with the disability community on co-design formed a large part of Council's work in 2021-22. Council Members who work on Co-design Steering Committees have an important role to guide, support, and strengthen engagement with the disability community for NDIA co-design projects on:

- Information Gathering for Access and Planning
- Home and Living
- Supported Decision Making
- Participant Safety.

Engagement with the disability community and sector is important to Council. It has formed a part of past recommendations, because strengthening relationships and re-building trust with the disability sector ensures that we can all heal and move forward. It also ensures the participant voice and original Scheme intent stays at the centre of the NDIA's work.

As you may know, I started my roles as Principal Member of Council and NDIA Board Member on 1 January 2022. The importance of these roles is not lost on me. As a woman with disability, I am proud to represent people with disability in my work. Now more than ever, it is important that the voice of people with disability reaches the boardroom of the NDIA. This ensures that those who make decisions about the NDIS understand the issues that people with disability face.

Given my current work on the Board, I can assure you that my colleagues take Council's advice very seriously. Not only because our advice is a part of Section 144 of the NDIS Act. But because the Board also recognises that Council Members' work in the disability community, networks, and personal experience of disability adds to the impact of Council's advice and gives life to the NDIS Act's vision for Council. All past and present NDIA Board Chairs have been unwavering in their support of Council—and I am thankful to each of them for this.

Council is in a unique position because it has a statutory pathway to the Board. As well as links to NDIA business areas, the Minister for the NDIS, and the Disability Reform Ministers. This only strengthens the impact of our advice.

The high regard and respect held for Council's advice across various levels of governance, oversight, and government is important to us. I am thankful to Hon Linda Reynolds CSC, former Minister for the NDIS, for her engagement with Council. At the same time, I want Council to forge strong relationships with the recently elected Australian Government, The Hon Bill Shorten MP, Minister for the NDIS, and state and territory governments, now and into the future.

I am pleased that in my first six months as Principal Member, the strong collaboration and engagement between Council and the Board has continued. For this, I am indebted to Ms Robyn Kruk AO, former Council Principal Member and NDIA Board Member, as well as the NDIA executive leadership team and the Board, who have worked tirelessly to strengthen ties with Council.

On a personal note, Robyn's leadership and mentorship helped me transition from Council Member and Deputy Chair to Principal Member and Board Member. I am proud to build on her legacy and the legacy of all Principal Members who have walked before me.

I would also like to thank my fellow colleagues on Council, Reference Groups, and the NDIA Board, as well as NDIA staff, for their passion and contribution over the past year. While Council has achieved a lot, we want to achieve more. We want to make the Scheme better for people with disability and their families, and to ensure all participants realise the benefits of this visionary social reform.

It has been an honour serving as Principal Member of Council, knowing that our collective work and engagement has made important changes to the NDIS for participants and their families. We all hope that in some way, Council has made a difference in their lives.

My aim is that participants live a life of their choice and get the supports they need to be independent, safe, and included in their communities. We are all committed to continuing to advise and engage with the NDIA Board, NDIA staff, and the disability community to improve the NDIS for participants.



**Ms Leah van Poppel**

**Principal Member of the Independent Advisory Council to the NDIS & NDIA Board Member**

**‘Council has Members from across the country, from a range of different disability types, Members who have direct experience of disability, and who are family and carers. Council also has Members from a range of different cultural experiences. So we’re able to provide the NDIA Board and NDIA with diverse input into ways to improve the NDIS.’**

**Ms Leah van Poppel, Principal Member of the Independent Advisory Council to the NDIS & NDIA Board Member**

# Our important advisory role

Council was established in 2013, as part of the [NDIS Act 2013](#), to be the independent voice for participants in the NDIS. Because of this, we have an important statutory role. Our role is to give Advice to the NDIA Board at our own initiative or at the Board's request.

Chapter 6, Part 3, Division 1, Section 144(1) of the NDIS Act 2013 outlines that Council's advice should aim to draw attention to the most important issues affecting people with disability. Additionally, Council's advice should aim to improve the way the NDIS works for participants and improve NDIS policy, process, and services.

The advice Council gives the Board is highly regarded and valued. It connects the NDIA Board to the participant experience and puts the participant voice at the centre of the NDIS. Our advice also highlights the current issues affecting people with disability, which is important for the Board to know and consider as part of its role.

Along with providing advice to the Board, Council is very engaged with providing input and expertise to NDIA business areas and external stakeholders. This input and know-how is sought after, and the NDIA is engaging with us more than ever to improve NDIS policies, systems, and services. This engagement aligns with Council's focus on co-design with the NDIA and disability community.

And this collective engagement improves the NDIS and gives better outcomes for people with disability.



Above: Photo of Council Members working at a Council meeting.



Council Members bring our advice to life through their skills, experience, and knowledge about different areas of disability. Most current Members are people with disability—or have broad-ranging lived experience that helps Council fulfil its function. When appointing Members, the Minister for the NDIS - in consultation with state and territory governments - ensures that Council's membership reflects the diversity of people with disability. Because of this, members truly represent the voice of people with disability in their communities and networks.

Our advice would not be possible without Council's Reference Groups. Our Reference Groups are a valuable think tank for Council. They provide expertise and advice about specific areas of disability including children, young people and families, equity and inclusion, home and living, and intellectual disability.

Our Reference Groups also provide valuable contributions and guidance toward Council's advice. Together they work hard to bring Council's advice to life and play an important advisory role for the NDIA.

## Council Members

Council Members are disability experts, advocates, carers, and academics. Our Members also know a lot about the NDIS. This includes how the NDIS works, and the services and supports available for all Australians, especially those in rural and remote areas. Members represent most Australian states and territories and includes Members from First Nations and culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) communities.

During the year there were changes to Council's membership. The Minister for the NDIS appointed Ms Leah van Poppel as the new Principal Member and NDIA Board Member with effect from 1 January 2022. This followed the resignation of Ms Robyn Kruk as Council Principal Member and NDIA Board Member, with effect from 31 December 2021.

Additionally, the Minister for the NDIS appointed Dr George Taleporos as Council Member, with effect from 1 January 2022. This followed the resignation of Mrs Judy Huett, Council Member, with effect from 31 December 2021.

Current Council Members, as at 30 June 2022, include:

- Ms Leah van Poppel, Principal Member & NDIA Board Member (formerly Council Deputy Chair, September 2020 - December 2021)
- Ms Kerry Allan-Zinner
- Dr Sharon Boyce
- Adjunct Associate Professor Jennifer Cullen
- Dr Leighton Jay
- Ms Sylvana Mahmic
- Ms Tricia Malowney OAM
- Mr James Manders
- Ms Sam Paior
- Ms Liz Reid AM
- Dr George Taleporos
- Mr Mark Tonga.

Dr Ben Gauntlett and Ms Belinda Epstein-Frisch AM support Council Members with their work. Dr Gauntlett supports Council in his role as Expert Adviser. He is the Disability Discrimination Commissioner at the Australian Human Rights Commission. Ms Epstein-Frisch supports Council in her role as Independent Consultant. She helps develop Council's advice.

## Current Council Members



### **Ms Leah van Poppel, Council Principal Member & NDIA Board Member**

Ms Leah van Poppel became Council Principal Member and NDIA Board Member on 1 January 2022. She helps to shape and guide Council's advice and priorities, to improve the future direction and implementation of the NDIS. Ms van Poppel is also a part of the NDIA Board. In her Board role, Ms van Poppel is a member of the Sustainability Committee. Before her current roles, she served as Council's Deputy Chair, from September 2020 to December 2021, supporting the former Principal Member with her duties. A respected Council Member since July 2017, Ms van Poppel draws on Council Members to use their lived experience of disability, and understanding of complex disability community issues, to put people with disability at the heart of Council's advice. She has experience in state and federal government policy and advocacy for people with disability and served as former Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of Women with Disabilities Victoria. Ms van Poppel is a woman with disability.

Read more about her experience [at our website.](#)



### **Ms Kerry Allan-Zinner, Council Member**

Ms Kerry Allan-Zinner is a valued Council Member and an experienced leader in the West Australian disability sector. She is a passionate disability human rights advocate who speaks up to promote disability awareness. She also serves on the Governance Steering Committee for National Disability Services' 'WA Ready to Go Home project', developing solutions to hospital discharge. Ms Allan-Zinner was born with cerebral palsy, and her lived experience has informed her work as Council Member, since July 2017.

Read more about her experience [at our website.](#)



**Dr Sharon Boyce, Council Member & Home and Living Reference Group Member**

Dr Sharon Boyce joined Council in July 2020. She is an educator, author, and disability advocate with over 30 years' experience across diverse disability community groups. She is a person with disability from Queensland. She is also Chair of the Queensland Disability Advisory Council. Dr Boyce works hard to help Council understand the complexity of disability in Australia. She does this by using lived experience and knowledge to promote a true understanding of disability, diversity, and complex health issues.

Read more about her experience [at our website](#).



**Adjunct Associate Professor Jennifer Cullen, Council Member & Equity and Inclusion Reference Group Co-Chair**

Adjunct Associate Professor Jennifer Cullen is passionate about working with communities to ensure people with disability and their families get support and services. She advocates for issues that affect First Nations people and those living in rural and remote areas. Associate Professor Cullen has Aboriginal heritage and important networks with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. She is also the CEO of Synapse, an organisation that helps people with brain injury. She has over 33 years' experience working in disability and aged care services. Associate Professor Cullen has been a Council Member since July 2014 and is Co-Chair of the Equity and Inclusion Reference Group.

Read more about her experience [at our website](#).



**Dr Leighton Jay, Council Member & Home and Living Reference Group Co-Chair**

Dr Leighton Jay joined Council in October 2020. He is also the Chair of the Home and Living Reference Group. Dr Jay has experience in the disability and academic sectors in Western Australia, giving advice on policies and services that impact people with disability. He is passionate about creating communities that value the voice of people with disability and inclusion. He is also a parent of a NDIS participant with complex disability support needs and works as Company Director and Principal at Sotica. Before joining Council, Dr Jay served as Member on a Council Reference Group.

Read more about his experience [at our website](#).



**Ms Sylvana Mahmic, Council Member & Children, Young People and Families Reference Group Co-Chair**

Ms Sylvana Mahmic is a respected Council Member with experience in early childhood intervention and self-management in New South Wales. She has worked as a Council Member since July 2014, and she is also the Co-Chair of Council’s Children, Young People and Families Reference Group. She is a parent of a NDIS participant with cerebral palsy and intellectual disability. Ms Mahmic works hard to support families and children with disability gain independence for a full life in the community. She is the CEO of Plumtree.

Read more about her experience [at our website.](#)



**Ms Tricia Malowney OAM, Council Member & Equity and Inclusion Reference Group Member**

Ms Tricia Malowney OAM joined Council in July 2020. She is a person with disability and human rights advocate based in Victoria. Ms Malowney has expertise in health, justice and family violence sectors, and is passionate about equity for women with disabilities. She is also a consultant to government and non-government agencies, where she promotes the elimination of intersectional disadvantage for people with disabilities. Ms Malowney currently serves as the Chief Accessibility Advocate for the Victorian Department of Transport.

Read more about her experience [at our website.](#)



**Mr James Manders, Council Member**

Mr James Manders has been a Council Member since July 2017. Based in the Australian Capital Territory, he advocates for the needs of people with disability in the workplace, including diversity and inclusion at work. He is also interested in how assistive technology helps people with disability. Mr Manders has over 25 years’ experience in financial services, working as an investment banker. He has lived experience of disability.

Read more about his experience [at our website.](#)



**Ms Sam Paior, Council Member & Intellectual Disability Reference Group Member Co-Chair**

Ms Sam Paior joined Council in July 2020, after working as a Council Reference Group Member. She is an advocate and service provider from South Australia, who is passionate about human rights, inclusion, and clear communication for people with disability. Ms Paior has a hearing impairment and is also a parent of two young adult NDIS participants. As the CEO of The Growing Space, she gives support coordination and training to NDIS participants and their families. Ms Paior holds over 20 years' experience in the sector.

Read more about her experience [at our website.](#)



**Ms Liz Reid AM, Council Member & Children, Young People and Families Reference Group Member**

Ms Liz Reid AM has been a valued Council Member since July 2017, representing the Northern Territory. She is passionate about equal opportunity for economic and social inclusion, ensuring people with disability can take part in their communities. Ms Reid has experience in the community, disability, and social justice sectors. She is the Executive Officer of YouthWorX NT, supporting young Territorians achieve lifelong social, economic and career success.

Read more about her experience [at our website.](#)



**Dr George Taleporos, Council Member & Home and Living Reference Group Member**

Dr George Taleporos joined Council in January 2022, after working as a Home and Living Reference Group Member. He has over 20 years' experience advocating for disability rights and self-directed supports. Dr Taleporos is a person with physical disability and high support needs based in Victoria. He currently holds various senior roles in the Victorian disability sector, including serving as the Chair of the Victorian Disability Advisory Council.

Read more about his experience [at our website.](#)



### **Mr Mark Tonga, Council Member & Home and Living Reference Group Member**

Mr Tonga joined Council in July 2020 and represents New South Wales. He holds several roles within the disability community and not-for-profit sectors. These roles give him a strong advocacy platform to increase inclusion, policy and supports for people with diverse disabilities. Mr Tonga advocates for fairness, collaboration, and community engagement in all his work. An accountant by profession, Mr Tonga acquired tetraplegia as a 35-year-old, following a rugby incident.

Read more about his experience [at our website](#).

## **Current Council Member support**



### **Dr Ben Gauntlett, Council Expert Adviser**

Dr Ben Gauntlett has been Council's Expert Adviser since May 2019. He brings his perspective as the Disability Discrimination Commissioner at the Australian Human Rights Commission to support Council's work. As Commissioner, he promotes the importance of human rights in society. He advocates for dignity and respect for people with disability. Commissioner Gauntlett also serves as Chair of Australia's Disability Strategy Advisory Council. He has lived experience of disability and is a quadriplegic.

Read more about his experience [at our website](#).



### **Ms Belinda Epstein-Frisch AM, Council Independent Consultant**

Ms Belinda Epstein-Frisch AM has been Council's Independent Consultant since 2014. She works with Council and Reference Groups Members to bring advice to life for the NDIA Board. Ms Epstein-Frisch has experience in advocacy, community development and social policy for people with disability. She has also been a member of ministerial advisory councils on disability reform and education at state and national level.

Read more about her experience [at our website](#).

## Former Council Members



**Ms Robyn Kruk AO, Council Principal Member  
(July 2020 – December 2021) & NDIA Board Member  
(January 2017 – December 2020)**

Ms Robyn Kruk AO served as Council Principal Member from July 2020 to December 2021. Her leadership and advocacy in this role elevated Council's advice to the NDIA Board and within the NDIA. Under her guidance, Council's advice has helped shape the direction of the NDIS. Ms Kruk also served as a Member of the NDIA Board, with roles on the People and Remuneration Committee and Risk Committee and Audit Committee. She has many years of experience as a chief executive of national and state policy, regulatory and service delivery agencies, with a strong background in health and mental health.



**Mrs Judy Huett, Council Member (July 2017 – December 2021)  
& Intellectual Disability Reference Group Member**

Mrs Judy Huett was a long serving Council Member, who stepped down from her role in December 2021. She joined Council in July 2017, and over the years she became a respected Member and advocate for people with intellectual disability in the NDIS. A capacity building and self-advocacy support worker from Tasmania, Mrs Huett continues to work with Council's Intellectual Disability Reference Group, of which she is a founding member. Mrs Huett is a person with intellectual disability.

**‘As part of my role on Council, I have had the opportunity to hear from many participants, their families and their communities. That is a great privilege for me, because the shared knowledge has helped inform my contribution to the many advice reports that Council has presented to the NDIA Board and the Agency. It has also helped inform my work as the Co-Chair of the Equity and Inclusion Reference Group, which looks at giving advice to Council about ways to make sure there is true diversity, inclusion, equal opportunity and fairness in the NDIS. As a proud Bidjara and Wakka Wakka woman, I work hard to strengthen the voice of First Nations people in the Scheme.’**

**Adjunct Associate Professor Jennifer Cullen, Council Member & Equity and Inclusion Reference Group Co-Chair**



# Reference Groups

Council's [four Reference Groups](#) support Council Members and further strengthen our advice. Our Reference Groups are an invaluable source of information across the areas of children, young people and families, equity and inclusion, home and living, and intellectual disability. Council established its Reference Groups through its own determined procedures.

Council's Reference Groups include the:

- Children, Young People and Families Reference Group
- Equity and Inclusion Reference Group
- Home and Living Reference Group
- Intellectual Disability Reference Group.

Each Reference Group includes a majority of people with disability, representatives from First Nations and CALD communities, as well as families and carers, researchers and disability experts from across Australia. The Reference Groups identify emerging issues, provide expert input into Council advice and act as an important source of expertise for the NDIA.

This year, Council's Reference Group Members agreed on their forward Work Plan for 2021-2023. This will guide the advice that Reference Groups provide the NDIA, across each focus area.

## Children, Young People and Families Reference Group

This Reference Group gives advice to support best practice for children, young people, their families, and carers to maximise independence and inclusion in the community.

Its membership includes:

### Co-Chairs

- Leah van Poppel
- Sylvana Mahmic.

### Council Member Representatives

- Sam Paior
- Liz Reid AM.

### Reference Group Members

- Katharine Annear
- Tash Binder
- Kane Blackman
- Jake Briggs
- Ara Cresswell
- Abraham Darouiche
- Catherine Dunn
- Karina Enks
- Melo Kalemkeridis
- Mary Sayers
- Professor Les White
- Professor Andrew Whitehouse.

## Equity and Inclusion Reference Group

This Reference Group gives advice to promote diversity and the principles of inclusion, equal opportunity, fairness, and transparency in the delivery of the NDIS.

This Reference Group seeks positive NDIS outcomes for:

- First Nations people
- CALD communities
- Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Intersex, Queer, Asexual Plus (LGBTIQ+) communities.

Its membership includes:

### Co-Chairs

- Leah van Poppel
- Adjunct Associate Professor Jennifer Cullen.

### Council Member Representative

- Tricia Malowney OAM.

### Reference Group Members

- Margherita Coppolino
- Jadhah Davies
- Faye Dickson
- Judith Drake
- Benjamin Garcia-Lee
- Catherine McAlpine
- Nigel Pernu
- Suzy Trindall
- Felix Walsh
- Barbel Winter.

## Home and Living Reference Group

This Reference Group gives advice to support best practice home and living supports and innovation models that help to build participant capacity, independence, and inclusion.

Its membership includes:

### Co-Chairs

- Leah van Poppel
- Dr Leighton Jay.

### Council Member Representatives

- Dr Sharon Boyce
- Adjunct Associate Professor Jennifer Cullen
- Dr George Taleporos
- Mark Tonga.

### Reference Group Members

- Alan Blackwood
- Liz Dutton
- Rebecca Evans
- Peter Gregory
- Scott Harry
- Grace Mills
- Associate Professor Mary-Ann O'Donovan
- Leanne Pearman
- Pat Sutton
- Peter Tully
- Robbi Williams.

## Intellectual Disability Reference Group

This Reference Group gives advice to support best practice in empowering people with intellectual disability to lead ordinary lives and be included in their community.

Its membership includes:

### Co-Chairs

- Leah van Poppel
- Sam Paior.

### Council Member Representatives

- Dr Leighton Jay.

### Reference Group Members

- Paige Armstrong
- Gavin Burner
- Marissa Carlyon
- Nathan Despott
- Angus Graham OAM
- Judy Huett
- Brodie McElroy
- Leonie McLean
- Professor Sally Robinson
- Jim Simpson
- Sarah Sutton
- Justen Thomas
- Catherine Viney
- Angela Yee.



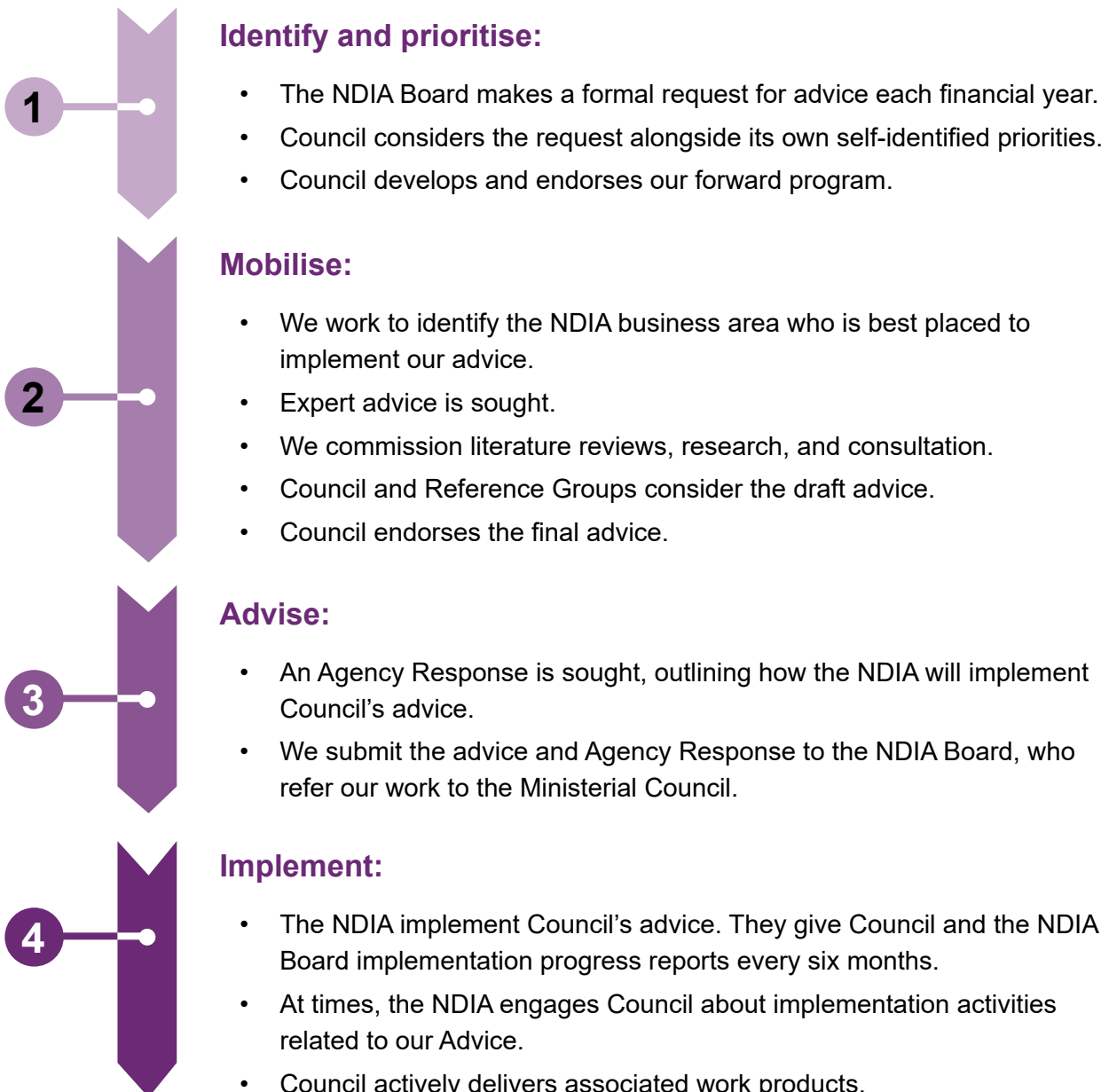
Above: Photo of Adjunct Associate Professor Jennifer Cullen, Council Member and Equity and Inclusion Reference Group Co-Chair, at a Council meeting.

# Our priorities

Council uses an Operating Model to fulfil our statutory role and guide priority advice for the NDIA Board. The Operating Model helps us better align Council's work with that of the NDIA. We also use this pathway to guide our input and advice to NDIA business areas and external stakeholders.

## Our Operating Model

Our Operating Model involves four steps:



# Our 2021–22 Work Plan

Council's Work Plan outlines the work we will do over a year. When developing our Work Plan, Council considers:

- the priorities identified by Council and its Reference Groups
- requests that the NDIA Board has made for Council's advice
- priorities outlined in the NDIA Corporate Plan

- other priorities from the government and disability sectors. This includes current issues of concern and the Disability Reform Ministers' priorities.

We focus on areas that will have meaningful, systemic, and long-lasting impact. Our Work Plan is always flexible and may change if we identify new priorities throughout the year.

## Council's 2021-22 Work Plan

### Advice for the NDIA Board:

- Equity in the NDIS: improving access and outcomes for diverse communities.
- Positive behaviour support.
- Participants who are ageing.

### Input and expertise to the NDIA/ external stakeholders:

- Best practice engagement with the disability community.
- Children and young people with autism spectrum disorder.
- Early Childhood Early Intervention (ECEI) reset.
- Complex support needs.
- Supporting participants with community inclusion.
- Access and eligibility.
- Self-management.
- Pathways to employment.
- Research and evaluation.

- Home and living supports.
- NDIA communications: embedding best practice in accessible and inclusive communications for all NDIS participants, families, and carers.
- Support for decision making.
- NDIA responsiveness to diverse populations for emergency preparedness.
- Information, Linkages and Capacity Building (ILC) program.
- Australia's Disability Strategy.
- Interface with mainstream services.
- Legislative changes to NDIS Act.
- Participant Service Guarantee.

### Priority work for Council's Reference Groups:

- Children, Young People and Families Reference Group.
- Equity and Inclusion Reference Group.
- Home and Living Reference Group.
- Intellectual Disability Reference Group.

### **Council’s communications**

- Ongoing implementation of Council’s Communications Strategy.
- Rollout of Council’s ‘Roadshow’, the education initiative to raise awareness in the NDIA about Council and its role.
- Council’s website redevelopment, with improvements to website accessibility and key documents.
- Increased engagement with external stakeholders including:
  - Disability Carer Representative Organisations
  - State and territory disability advisory groups
  - Department of Social Services
  - Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People with Disability
  - NDIS Quality and Safeguards Commission.

### **Monitoring Council’s advice**

- Continue to monitor and support the implementation of Council’s past advice to the NDIA Board. This includes:
  - Strengthening Scheme reforms to access and planning
  - Supporting local area coordinators (LACs) to be LACs
  - Support for families and carers
  - Choice and control to safely live a life of belonging and citizenship
  - NDIS supports for participants who are parents
  - Promoting best practice in Early Childhood Intervention in the NDIS
  - Support for decision making in the NDIS.



Above: Photo of Dr George Taleporos, Council Member and Home and Living Reference Group Member. Photo courtesy of South Brisbane Times.

## Member view: Jointly helping participants be in control of their lives

At the start of 2022, Council welcomed experienced disability and human rights advocate Dr George Taleporos to its established membership.

It has been a busy year for Dr Taleporos, who also holds various roles across the disability sector and works as a podcast host and producer.

We caught up with Dr Taleporos to talk about his experience on Council and what he wants to achieve as part of his work.

### **Q: What was your first reaction about your appointment?**

“I was thrilled to be appointed as Member of the Independent Advisory Council because my greatest goal in life is to do whatever I can to ensure that the NDIS delivers choice, control, and fantastic outcomes for people with disability.”

### **Q: You attended your first meeting in February 2022, and you have fast become an active contributor to Council. Can you tell us about that experience?**

“My first Council meeting was a bit nerve wracking. I was worried I would say the wrong thing, especially as I was the only new Member. It has taken me a few months to find my feet and to work out how best to work on Council, but I feel like I am finding my way.”

### **Q: What has been your highlight so far working with Council?**

“Having worked in disability advocacy and policy for over 20 years, I love the deep and thoughtful conversations that you have on Council about everything related to the NDIS. I even enjoy reading Council meeting packs! They give me helpful information and an ‘inside view’ of the issues facing the NDIS and I think that has made me a better advocate.”

### **Q: How important is it for you to be a part of Council?**

“It is a real honour to be able to work so closely with the NDIA Board and senior executives at the NDIA to deal with the critical issues facing participants. I am passionate about working together to solve problems and co-designing solutions to make sure that the NDIS upholds human rights and supports participants to be in control of their lives. That is what I love about being on Council, I get to do all the things I am passionate about together with a group of amazing leaders in our sector.”

# Promoting our work

**We continue to implement Council’s first ever Communications Strategy to raise awareness and understanding of Council and its work within the NDIA and disability community.**

This year we have:

- Continued to deliver information in plain English and Easy Read, because we are passionate about accessible communications.
- Trialled an Easy Read meeting pack for the Intellectual Disability Reference Group. We also delivered Easy Read translations for our regular bulletins, Work Plan and Annual Report.
- Publicly released over 20 bulletins about Council and Reference Group meetings and other related Council news.
- Publicly released and promoted Council’s Work Plan, for engagement, transparency and accountability around Council’s advice and priority work.
- Publicly released our Annual Report, to promote and highlight Council’s annual achievements.
- Updated online platforms to ensure up to date and accessible information, including the Council website, NDIA internal communications platforms, and other channels.
- Continued to find new ways to engage with the Minister for the NDIS, the NDIA Board and executive leadership team.

This year we also remained committed to our plans to redesign and redevelop Council’s website. We want our website and its content to meet the highest accessibility standards. Our planning and prioritisation for the redevelopment happened through collaboration with key NDIA business areas. This work is due to start in 2022-23.

In October 2021, we completed the Council Roadshow. The Roadshow was an awareness project to help NDIA staff learn more about Council’s role and advice. It also helped staff understand how to engage with Council and our networks to test ideas and co-design important work. We delivered approximately 20 presentations to 900 NDIA staff, who commended the interactive and informative presentations. The accessible videos, which featured Members describing in their own words Council’s important role and Council’s advice, were also well received. The Roadshows led to an unprecedented increase in NDIA business areas wanting to engage with Council to enhance their work.



# Year in review

2021

## July

- Council completes consultations on Scheme reforms with all state and territory disability advisory councils.
- Council's sends the advice '[Strengthening Scheme reforms to access and planning](#)' (DOCX, 159kB) to the NDIA Board, who forwarded the advice to the Disability Ministers.
- Senator the Hon Linda Reynolds CSC, former Minister for the NDIS, sends letters of thanks to Council Members for their advice on Scheme reforms.
- NDIA Board Member representatives attend the first Council meeting for the year, and every monthly meeting thereafter.
- Council continues to send monthly reports to the NDIA Board about issues and opportunities from their disability communities.

## September

- The first co-design workshop is held by the NDIA, with Council's involvement.
- Work starts on Council's advice for the NDIA Board called 'Equity in the NDIS: improving access and outcomes for diverse communities'.

## October

- Council gives input to the NDIA in response to the proposed changes to the NDIS Act.
- Council's Reference Groups hold their first meetings for the year.
- Council finishes its Roadshow.
- Hon Linda Reynolds CSC, former Minister for the NDIS, joined Council for the second time since her appointment in March 2021.

## December

- Ms Robyn Kruk finishes her appointment as Principal Member.
- Mrs Judy Huett finishes her appointment as Council Member.
- Hon Linda Reynolds CSC, former Minister for the NDIS, takes part in her third Council meeting.

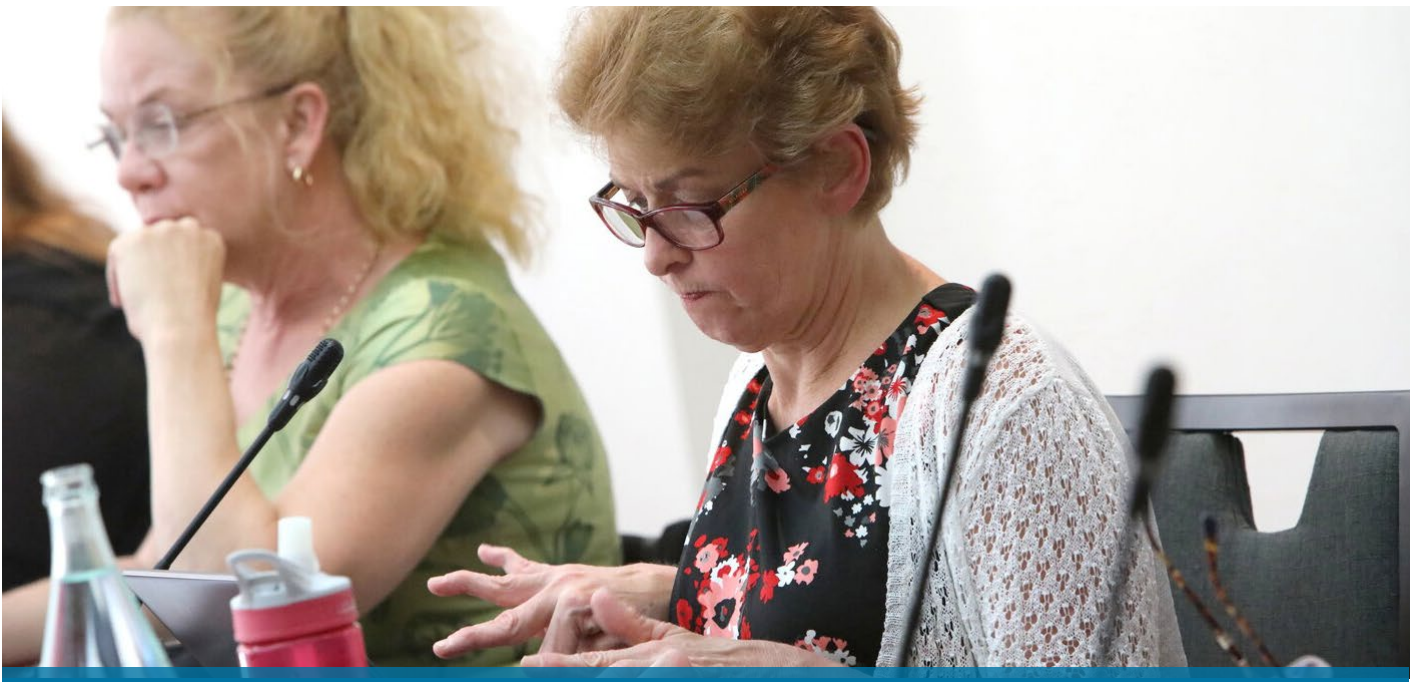
2022

- January**
- Ms Leah van Poppel becomes Council’s Principal Member and NDIA Board Member.
  - Dr George Taleporos becomes a Council Member.
- March**
- Council starts working on the advice for the NDIA Board about positive behaviour support.
  - Council representatives formally join the new Co-design Steering Committees on supported decision making, home and living, participant safety and information gathering for access and planning.
- April**
- Council’s Intellectual Disability Reference Group holds its second meeting of the year.
- May**
- All Council Reference Groups hold their second meeting of the year.
  - Council endorses the ‘Equity in the NDIS: improving access and outcomes for diverse communities’ advice. This advice will be sent to the Board in late 2022.
- June**
- The NDIA provides Council with a Board progress report, which tracks the NDIA’s progress against Council’s advice.
  - Scoping work starts for the advice to the NDIA Board about participants who are ageing.
  - The Intellectual Disability Reference Group holds its third meeting of the year. The meeting is the first face to face meeting held since the start of the coronavirus pandemic.

# Advice to the NDIA Board and input and expertise

‘For each piece of advice to the Board, we’re guided by a small group made up of Members of Council and Reference Groups. And we often invite external experts, people from the disability community, who contribute to guiding Council’s advice. We engage early with Agency staff to understand current policy, practice, and any work that they are undertaking at the moment that can impact on that advice.’

Ms Belinda Epstein-Frisch AM, Council Independent Consultant



Above: Photo of Council Members working at a Council meeting.

# Advice to the NDIA Board

Council has a statutory function to give advice to the NDIA Board about the delivery of the NDIS. This is a part of Section 144(1) of the [NDIS Act 2013](#). The Board must formally consider this advice as part of its function, alongside an Agency Response from the NDIA. Our advice and Agency Response are also sent to the Disability Ministers.

We write Council's advice to the Board as a report. The report is developed by Council's Independent Consultant who collates Members' views. Our advice process is consultative in nature. We work with our Reference Groups and external stakeholders, such as people with disability, researchers, and sector experts, to inform the process.

Over the years, Council has developed a broad range of advice which is [available on Council's external website](#).

This year Council's development of advice to the NDIA Board featured in-depth engagement with Council, its Reference Groups, and external stakeholders, around three key areas:

- equity in the NDIS
- positive behaviour support
- participants who are ageing.

Our advice about Scheme reforms, '[Strengthening Scheme reforms to access and planning](#)' (DOCX, 159kB), was developed in 2020-21 and submitted to the Board in July 2021. Learn more about how we developed this advice in [Council's Annual Report 2020-21 \(PDF, 2MB\)](#).

## What is the advice 'Equity in the NDIS: improving access and outcomes for diverse communities' about?

'Equity in the NDIS: improving access and outcomes for diverse communities' aims to make the NDIS fair for all. The advice calls for equity around participant access, participation, and outcomes. The work focuses on the needs of the most marginalised NDIS participants. Specifically, those who identify as First Nations, CALD, and LGBTIQ+. We developed the advice in collaboration with the Equity and Inclusion Reference Group.

We took our time to respectfully engage with leaders from diverse disability community groups—to listen to and learn from them about meaningful ways to improve equity in the NDIS.

The advice recommends that the NDIA adopts a refreshed and co-designed approach to achieving equity in the NDIS. The vision of this advice is that the NDIS is inclusive, safe, and responsive for all participants. The advice also calls for a whole-of-government approach to ensure that all Australians with disability have their support needs met to achieve equitable outcomes.

Council endorsed, 'Equity in the NDIS: improving access and outcomes for diverse communities', in May 2022. We will submit the advice to the NDIA Board later in 2022.

## What is the advice ‘Positive behaviour support’ about?

Our ‘Positive behaviour support’ advice highlights the need to improve process and practice for participants who need behaviour support. It addresses the need to create individualised strategies for people with disability that are responsive to a person’s needs, to reduce and eliminate the need for regulated restrictive practices. The advice aims to assist participants in the NDIS with behaviour support needs, and their families, by safeguarding their dignity and quality of life. Advice development has included intensive collaboration with Council’s Intellectual Disability Reference Group.

The advice raises awareness of the challenges participants who need behaviour support face in the NDIS. It also gives advice about the ways the NDIA can improve planning and assessment outcomes for these participants, using evidence-based strategies and person-centred supports that address a person’s needs and the underlying cause of their behaviours of concern. Council believes in the importance of the NDIS promoting support strategies that are responsive to a person’s needs and environment.

Council will endorse and submit the advice to the NDIA Board in 2022-23.

## What is the advice ‘Participants who are ageing’ about?

The advice ‘Participants who are ageing’ aims to raise awareness about the challenges faced by participants as they age. The advice calls for improved NDIS process and planning, to ensure older participants in the NDIS have the supports and care they need to live a good life.

The advice responds to the growth in the population of older persons with disability in the NDIS, and evidence that some participants are now outliving their parents or main carers. It also responds to concerns about inadequate or undignified care, quality service options, and guardianship provisions for older people. Council believes that older people with disability have the right to personal assistance and access to supports to live independently and be a part of their community.

Council will complete and endorse ‘Participants who are ageing’ during 2022-23.



Above: Photo of Council Members working at a Council meeting.

## Input and expertise

Council also provides input and expertise directly to NDIA business areas and external stakeholders. This input helps the NDIA access up-to-date information about current issues within the disability community. Because of this, Council's input is often time critical and allows NDIA staff to apply the advice as they are developing their work.

Council gives this expertise as part of our own determined procedures. We may give this input as a written report or as a verbal update at a Council meeting, out of session engagement with Council, or by working collaboratively with the NDIA through subgroups. Whilst the NDIA may update Council on their response to the input we give, this is not a formal requirement.

Over the past 12 months, Council has provided input and expertise to the NDIA on a broad range of issues. Standout examples of our input and expertise includes Council's work to develop guides for understanding supports. As part of this work, Council provided feedback on several participant support guides for employment, autism, SDA, and others.

Council also made a significant contribution to the NDIA's work to amend the NDIS Act around plan variation. Our submission has influenced improvements to the NDIA's approach for participant plan variation. Whereby a participant can now vary their plan without being required to go through a plan reassessment process. The work was an excellent example of collaboration between Council and the NDIA. It showcased Council's responsiveness to timelines and other external pressures and resulted in a positive outcome for the NDIA and participants.

Additional examples of the high-impact of Council's work includes our:

### Input on self-management

At the request of Council and the NDIA, a subgroup of Council and Reference Group Members worked together on the development of a self-management policy. Council has a long-standing history of supporting approaches that promote the understanding and uptake of self-management by participants.

Council was able to describe to the NDIA the current challenges and barriers around self-management, as well as the best practice approach. To further support this work, the NDIA held a public consultation on self-management for participants and nominees.

The result of this close collaboration was the development of the NDIA's self-management policy and implementation plan, as well as the update of the 'Guide to self-management'.

### Input to the plan implementation directory

Council worked with the NDIA's Participant Advocacy team to develop the NDIS plan implementation directory, officially launched in May 2022. Council's aim with this work was to empower NDIS participants, their family, and carers by helping to improve information and advice about how to use their NDIS plans effectively.

Council's focus included championing the importance of co-design in project planning and delivery. We also recommended that consultations focus on diversity, fully understand the wide-ranging information needs of participants, their families, and carers. A Council Member helped with the testing panel, and the NDIA also consulted with the broader disability sector and participants. Collaboration between Council and the NDIA continues on the next phase of content development.



Above: Photo of the disability community working together. Photo courtesy of Griffith University.

## Co-design: An important path for positive change

Educator and disability advocate Dr Sharon Boyce is passionate about co-design and participant safety. As a Council Member she works in partnership with the NDIA and people with disability to co-design improvements to the NDIS.

Dr Boyce has been working towards co-design with the NDIA since July 2021 and is a Member of the Co-design Advisory Group. She says the Advisory Group has “evolved and become more interconnected” over the year, and is an important guide for the NDIA’s co-design approach.

“For me, co-design is an important and layered process. It comes down to genuine engagement, and organisations like the NDIA working with diverse groups in our community as equal partners to design solutions for systemic issues. It is about sharing knowledge, lived experience, and stories from different perspectives of disability,” Dr Boyce says.

Dr Boyce has also been working on the Participant Safety Co-design Steering Committee. Through the Steering Committee’s guidance the NDIA will develop a Participant Safety Policy and implementation strategy.

The Steering Committee’s work will also guide the NDIA’s overarching approach to support the ongoing safety of participants and to empower and better support them. “All NDIS participants have the right

to be safe and get safe services and supports from their providers or carers.”

According to Dr Boyce the co-design work on safety has been progressing in a positive way. “Co-design is not a perfect or easy process. It takes time, and we all must work and learn together. It is a journey, but we are on the right path to create positive change,” she said.

She notes progress the Steering Committee has made through a series of co-design workshops with different groups to develop principles for participant safety. “We have engaged people from diverse groups as part of our work. This includes First Nations, LGBTIQ+ and CALD communities, as well as people with complex communication needs and people experiencing, or at risk of experiencing, homelessness.”

When asked how she hopes the work will help people with disability, Dr Boyce said, “I want to ensure the work explores safety through the idea of belonging and cultural safety. At the same time, I want NDIS participants to always be safe from harm and from others harming them.”

While Dr Boyce advocates that all participants have the right to live a life free from abuse, exploitation, and violence, she also acknowledges “that safety is also about dignity, respect, and having flexibility”.



**Independent  
Advisory  
Council**  
to the **ndis**

---

## **Independent Advisory Council to the NDIS**

[advisorycouncil@ndis.gov.au](mailto:advisorycouncil@ndis.gov.au)

[ndis-iac.com.au](http://ndis-iac.com.au)