

Independent Advisory Council News Bulletin 8 June 2021

The Independent Advisory Council (Council) to the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) brings the participant's voice to the heart of the NDIS. The Council gives independent advice to the National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA) Board, as part of the *NDIS Act 2013*.

Council-convened consultation on Scheme reforms, including Independent Assessments

The Independent Advisory Council (Council) to the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) has a statutory role set out in the NDIS Act to advise the National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA) Board on the basis of lived experience of disability.

The Council were invited by the NDIA Board and Minister for the NDIS to convene a consultation on Scheme reforms, including Independent Assessments (IA), during the period of the Minister's pause to the legislative timeline for changes to the NDIS Act. Council Members have been instrumental in the design of the consultation process and will have an ongoing key role in the development of future engagement. There are time constraints on this particular element of engagement and Council acknowledges that there were many individuals who were willing to be directly engaged in this round of Council consultations.

The Council invited a further number of additional representatives from its Reference Groups and across the sector to attend in their own capacity to:

- Strengthen representation and expertise
- Ensure wider input from the disability community to this process.

The number of people invited also took account of the need to ensure a manageable group size for the planned workshops in June and July.

The process commences with a two day Scheme Reform Forum in Sydney on 10 and 11 June, which will be independently facilitated by ThinkPlace.

The objective of this process is to:

- Hear from the Council and wider disability community regarding concerns raised, including what issues require further engagement and how further engagement should occur.
- Provide guidance to the NDIA Board and Minister for the NDIS on what specific changes need to be incorporated to the Government's access and planning proposals (including IA), in advance of the Minister's planned consultation on exposure drafts of the legislation.

This is neither a one off process nor is it intended as a standalone engagement. A range of other mechanisms have been brought together to form an integrated approach to this Council-led engagement. This includes:

- Extending invites to all State and Territory Disability Advisory Councils for independently facilitated workshops led by ThinkPlace and involving Council members, alongside NDIA staff. These would fall after the 11 June, and are an opportunity to take further soundings on the deliberations regarding Scheme reforms.
- Engagement with the Disability Representative Organisations Group / NDIA CEO Forum of Disability Advocacy Organisations on 18 June. This workshop will also be facilitated by ThinkPlace and involve Council members, alongside NDIA staff.
- Further engagement through the NDIS Participant Reference Group.

While it will always be the case that the number of people invited to each workshop is limited by practical considerations, we have tried in good faith to ensure that opportunities exist for all to have their voices heard in this process which represents a genuine opportunity to influence government policy and NDIA implementation on a variety of important issues.

This initial phase of engagement will conclude in mid-July, with the provision of Council's advice under its powers in the NDIS Act to the NDIA Board and Minister for the NDIS, on changes and improvements that need to be made to reform proposals. In accordance with our normal procedure the Council will communicate the nature of this advice publicly.

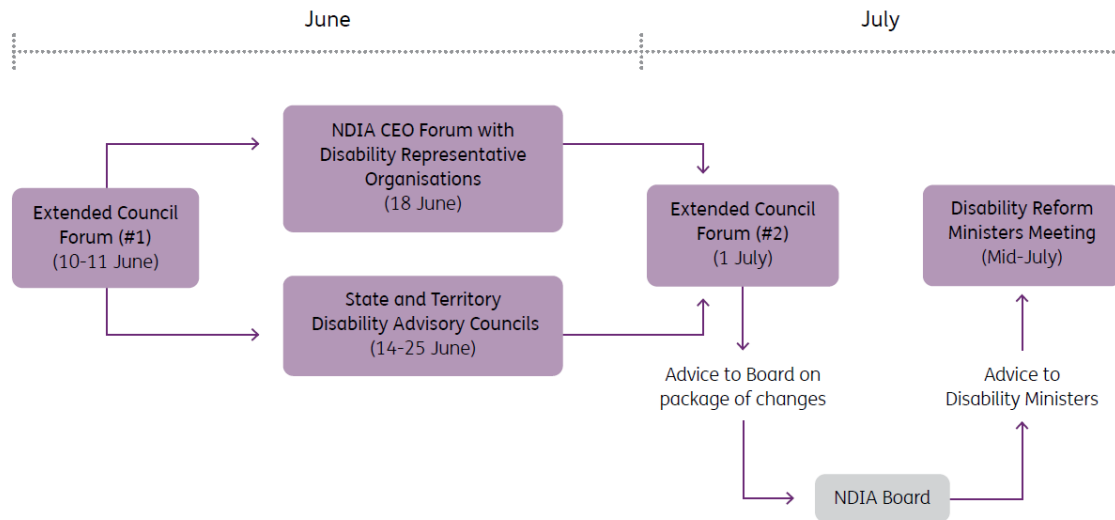
While the immediate focus of this engagement and advice will relate to particular aspects of scheme reform, including addressing community concerns regarding the introduction of IAs and how the NDIA and Government should respond to consultation feedback on this matter, we have assurances from the NDIA that this engagement will continue over the coming months regarding other important elements of NDIS reform – including the personalised budgets approach, NDIS Home and Living Policy and support for decision making for NDIS participants.

It is the Council's hope that this engagement can help to begin rebuilding some of the trust that has been damaged as a result of the NDIA's insufficient approach to consultation to date, providing a platform for more transparent and constructive engagement with the disability community and wider sector on matters that are of great importance to people with disability and the government. While there are limitations on the current feedback processes Council welcomes feedback and opportunities to further connect [via Council Secretariat](#).

More information

Council has included a process diagram below, that shows how it will lead its engagement to provide advice on Scheme reforms.

Independent Advisory Council led engagement to provide advice on Scheme reforms



Above: Process diagram that shows how Council will lead its engagement to provide advice on Scheme reforms.